

The Fire of Spring

By Edward Noble

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THE FIRE OF SPRING



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THE FIRE OF SPRING

BY
EDWARD NOBLE

AUTHOR OF 'THE BOTTLE FILLERS,' 'OUTPOSTS OF THE FLEET'
'THE MANDARIN'S BELL,' ETC.

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way.
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.*



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1926

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The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE • MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

All States are in perpetual war with all. For that which we call Peace is no more than merely a name, whilst in reality Nature has set all Communities in an unproclaimed but everlasting war with each other.

PLATO

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

PEACE AND PLENTY

I. EFFIE MASSENSHAW	3
II. PATRICK M'GRATH	14
III. THE ROCK	28

BOOK TWO

WAIT AND SEE

I. THE BACKGROUND	39
II. LEADERS AND LED	57
III. THE APOSTATES	74
IV. CONFERENCE?	86
V. REPERCUSSIONS	100
VI. MIDGES	107
VII. THE LONDON SCENE	116
VIII. ALAN WASSITER	128

BOOK THREE

IKON-SMASHERS

I. RIDING THE STORM	151
II. MARBLE ARCH	167
III. A DIVERSION	180
IV. RAIN AND DARKNESS	192

V. CRITICAL	198
VI. THE CRUX OF IT	208
VII. THE WRECKERS	215
VIII. M'GRATH DECIDES	242

BOOK FOUR

THE SHADOW

I. THE MEETING-PLACE	275
II. EFFIE'S PRAYER	293
III. REACTION	315

PROEM

THERE is an Arab legend which tells of the death of Solomon, the King of the Jews:

‘On a certain day,’ it says, ‘the Great King entered the Temple, robed and crowned, and he stood between its pillars before the great altar, leaning on his ebony staff which was sealed with the sign of the Pentagraph. And as he stood there, silent, like a painted king with his snow-white beard falling over a robe of Tyrian purple, and his face to the Oracle, where the hymn died under the wings of the Cherubim — suddenly the hand of God beckoned him and he died.

‘But although the King was dead, no man dared approach him because of the sacred Pentagraph upon his staff and upon the magic ring. So he remained still, leaning on his staff, with the death stare in his eyes, while all the people watched him wondering when he would move.

‘At last a little grey mouse ran from behind a pillar and nibbled at the leather at the bottom of his staff. Then suddenly the Great King lurched and fell with a crash flat upon his face in the dust — and out of the dust they picked a golden crown.’

THE FIRE OF SPRING

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BOOK I

PEACE AND PLENTY

1910

THE FIRE OF SPRING



BOOK I

PEACE AND PLENTY

1910

CHAPTER I

EFFIE MASSENSHAW

ONE of the curiosities of the crusade of the Militant Suffragettes was that its protagonists were women of charm and position who would have been acknowledged leaders without fighting to obtain that distinction. More singular still was the fact that Effie Massenshaw was the soul of this movement.

That a girl should be allied to the forces of Sansculotism and the tenets of Proudhon and Bakunin was of itself a curiosity; but that a girl not yet twenty should be engaged in brawls, window smashing, church-burning, and similar crimes, because man had made some stupid laws in the past, and must now pay for them, seemed to argue a lack of balance, or the mental attitude of persons troubled by the obscuration of those whose prejudices have overcome their reason.

Alan Wassiter said the idea was as logical as a recent Irish demand that, because Cromwell resorted to extreme measures in order to pacify the warring sections in Ireland, the present generation of Englishmen must pay

for the wreckage which has occurred since. But that was before Wassiter became converted to the Cause and active in its development.

In point of fact these people took as much trouble to alienate public opinion as many of us do to conciliate it.

Effie was in the forefront here. She was never so happy as when girding at some world custom, some prejudice, if you like, held sacred by those who governed. And she took punishment if it came her way quite as calmly as she organized the punishment of inoffensive tradesmen. She should have been the best-hated woman in Town, and was the most popular.

People who went to her meetings came away impressed as much by her appeals for justice and her logicity as by her plain speaking. It is possible they came away confused as to the issues thrust so prominently before them; confused by the speaker's refinement and charm; the wit and badinage which flickered amidst such sordid and debatable subjects as the incidence of the divorce laws, and the miracle which would ensue if woman were permitted to vote.

They saw a young girl standing at the accustomed small table with a glass of water upon one corner of it; standing before them quite unflurried, marshalling her facts and presenting them in phrases which rang with contempt for mankind; for man-made laws and all the world-old order of things which the majority of us hitherto have taken for granted. They listened to her beautiful contralto and rubbed ears over arguments which appalled; which were sinister, dangerous, fallacious, passionate, fine, philosophic, each in its place; and recognized they came from the lips of a young girl — a girl whom Destiny had set up to challenge and perhaps to destroy.

They came and heard and went away, moved each in his own way, prognosticating, argumentative, ready to agree. All was in the lap of the gods. The feast was spread let those come to it who would.

There was nothing sinister or Machiavellian in Effie's attitude or in that of her associates. They were women obsessed by a profound belief in the remedy they offered; in despair at the crafty methods of politicians and at the promises and subterfuge of successive Governments. They were women engaged in the hotch-potch warfare of lawyers in a land which seemed hypnotized by the talk of its politicians. And they moved about the countryside with torch and chemicals threatening arms; openly footing it before a discredited Parliament with their witch-broth, in the first figure of that *danse macabre* where presently they were to pair with the men against whom they now fought.

Effie Massenshaw, the heart and soul of this, Mary Sladen, Edith Clifford, Lady Delany — all aiding and abetting her; doing their uttermost to produce chaos, the breakdown of Government for which Mrs. Massenshaw prayed. Patrick M'Grath drawn in, Dicky Farningham and the Wexfords; Alan Wassiter, who at one time was a sort of hero to Edith Clifford, and all that crowd of personages whom poor Haines called the 'Queasy Folk' pulled in, hiked in, as some said, in order to join in the dance which was to end where the poppies bloom in Flanders.

There were so many influences at work in Effie's educational processes that it becomes essential to set out that part which moulded her and instilled in her the hatred of mankind together with the cynical unbelief

which so troubled M'Grath. But long before he appeared on the scene, she had come to a moment when it would have been well for England, and perhaps for her own peace — for these things have their reactions — if, instead of instilling unbelief and disrespect and indiscipline, her elders had sought out some gentle sisterhood and placed her securely within its doors, enjoining simple meditation and prayer.

But that is not the mode in these days with youth, and youth has been so trained that it would certainly rebel. Isolation is imprisonment and anathema. Continuity of thought, logic, prayer, and the rest have scarcely marched hand in hand with the splenic fever we term Education. Games have taken their place, and with them a rather hectic independence, an individualistic bent, and that strange hybrid which later came to be known as 'self-determination' — all these have become the keynotes of character and the Charter of our uncharted libertarianism.

That, as Alan Wassiter would have explained, is the result of tension, a recoil from the stern attitude under which our fathers suffered when they 'learned to fear the rod and cry softly.' It is also apparent that youth was already at the opposite pole, not because we were thoughtless, but because, as the cynics say, in this as in most matters, we seem to think we have paid some other person to think for us.

The trouble is that we have not made it plain to those we have paid to do the thinking, that if they do not think as we wish them to think, we will put others in their place who will.

Now Iphigenia Massenshaw, the first name softened by all except her mother to Effie, had not learned to fear

the rod and cry softly any better than others who were her contemporaries. As a matter of fact the teaching of John Wesley's mother had not in any sense come her way. She was the product of an age which had put away the birch and set the rod in pickle for its own shoulders. She would have stood up to argue against the necessity for rod or punishment, or any kind of force — oppression she would have termed it, brutality — and that section of the Nation which follows those who make the most noise would have applauded her wisdom. It had become accustomed, perhaps hypnotized by this clamour, and the concurrent joy of watching contending footballers, to a stickleback termed Humanitarianism, with its twin brother Pacifism, and was prepared to go all lengths in its defence. A strange figment for an island people which had strewn the world with colonies and left its frontiers in the air. Further, it had learned from the same sinister source how to use its conscience so that it might obstruct Government and obtain the things it desired without paying for them.

And the Government of the day or the hour took note of each manifestation of the People's will and bowed its acquiescence.

The age, rather more than a decade ago only, was known as a humanitarian age, which is just another way of saying that it was an age which denied Christ's divinity and had established the divinity of the Soothsayer and the Charletan together with his brother the Philanthropist.

In truth it was an age rich in ideals and prolific in dogmatism. An age when the rod prepared by our own fathers was reaching our backs and making us wince.

On one side was the great wealth of the richest country in the world held mainly in the hands of a few financiers — often cosmopolitan; on the other, the offspring of those who to a large extent had made the wealth . . . small, wizened, afflicted with rickets, toothless but excessively alive and prolific; all huddled together in places called towns. And between these two extremes perambulated those who were known as leaders in this, that, or the other forlorn hope — people with solemn faces and theories the irreverent termed ‘jugged.’ Whether in fact they denied the divinity of Christ is not for argument here; but they denied the right of landlords to herd people in places which Charles Kingsley called ‘styres’ and there ‘to breed wild beasts.’

Now your humanitarian is very often a philanthropist, and the sum of his activities are in proportion only to his wealth and his lack of logic. A man may be a very useful member of Society if he be wealthy; but if he has not learned to fear the rod and cry softly — discipline in other words — he may quite easily do much harm to the State.

So, too, with Effie Massenshaw, who was a humanitarian of the surest, a philanthropist, an alchemist to transmute phrases, a lover of our beautiful England and her critic; a rebel and a very brilliant product of Roedean.

Because she might not graduate at Oxford, she did so at Newnham, and left her knife in the heart of the older University. Because she could not practise as a barrister and see vistas of the Bench in perspective, her blade touched the throat of Government. Because she could not practise with any sort of ‘chance’ either in law, or medicine, or the Church, she put on the gloves, and with verbal castigation harassed those who held her in leash and denied, because of her sex, that she was the equal of

Man, and must be classed with other voteless persons — the aliens, felons, idiots, and lunatics.

With some characters these ideas and beliefs are shed without much tossing; they are ephemera, with us in a moment of sentimentality, gone in the heyday of tomorrow. But in Effie Massenshaw was a strain which denied stalemate, which refused the logic of inevitability, and found her on occasion blindly at issue with tangible fact; yet opposed to it, fighting it, tooth and nail, beautifully, fearlessly.

This strain was of her mother — the strong, pertinacious, enthusiastic fashioner of dreams and theorems, a woman who would fight to the death rather than give way before an opponent. But there was another strain in Effie Massenshaw, equally headstrong, equally pertinacious, equally enthralling, and it came from her father's house, with a name which may be kin to love and sometimes is.

To speak more definitely, Effie was scarcely aware of the leaven inherited from her father. He was one of those strange beings who, having officiated as father to her and to her brother, had removed to other spheres of activity. He was not interested in dreams and theorems. They bored him. He was a soldier. If the age had been warlike, he would still have been a soldier, a guardsman — for he was endowed. As it was not warlike and the country seemed to be preparing for some kind of millenium, *inter alia*, at his expense, he decided quite early in Effie's life to take himself out of earshot of argument and shoot big game. Perhaps he did not intend to remain away — but that was the beginning.

If Mrs. Massenshaw's statements are correct, then doubtless Massenshaw of Massenshaw was entirely oc-

cupied moving about the wilds of Equatoria shooting anything which was stupid enough to flap ears in his presence; but there were folk who spoke of having seen him in Italy and Vienna, and that gave colour to other statements which Mrs. Massenshaw presently was compelled to admit. Meanwhile the house in Scotland was shut, the laird abroad, and his wife in London seeing to the education of her two small children.

Effie was perhaps five years old when she first heard that her father was away somewhere in pursuit of big game, her brother Harold one year younger. Whether he caught the game or lost it was a story the possibilities of which were infinite to the child's mind. She remembered her father in those days, and pleaded often to know when he would return. She had an inkling that his absence entailed sacrifice on her part. He no longer brought her toys or chocolates from the distant town. She had come to look upon these things as necessities, and argued that fathers existed to provide them.

Harold combated this; but the boy can scarcely be said to have remembered his father. And when he grew old enough to speak to Effie and his mother on the subject, he learned in some mysterious way that these were questions he must not put. His mother's answers were responsible for that, but with Effie it was otherwise.

Dad had been very wonderful to his small daughter. She remembered even now the beautiful mellowness of his voice; and his not less wonderful strength was forever impressed on her imagination. With time naturally she came to understand that he was not dead, but away big-game hunting; and she became jealous of the game which kept him from her. Later still she learned to know more

and found in her mother's eyes that the game was tragedy. It was long before she ventured to tell her mother what she had read, or what was her reason for her belief; but it came out eventually and the upshot was Effie as she was known on platforms and in Halls. A girl with a mission; a daughter who stood side by side with her mother, and challenged the law which permitted the agony she saw.

In those days her father came near to extinction as far as his daughter was concerned. He was pushed out of her life. Slowly, with bitter tears and self-communion, he became as one of those who are forgotten when in all truth he was ever present. She tried at length to get in touch with him and crossed to Paris in the hope that he would see her; but he had left for the East — Russia, so said the hotel people, and Effie came back with a new *motif* in her life. She took her place beside her mother definitely for all time. She practised speech, learned cutting phrases, and showed very soon how mankind may become the whipping-post for a woman's wit. She showed that love was but an interlude in the physical well-being of man; while the woman who became involved in it was lost.

This is sufficiently sweeping, in all truth. It was her mother's case put from the one side she understood. What remained was but adaptation. Her mother's cause became hers. Her mother's arguments, her mother's sophistries, similes, tricks of speech, her armoury in the battle with authority. . . . She was not concerned, in her digging, with externals; she pried at the roots and delved often so deeply that the first cause was buried in the dust and turmoil of excavation.

To watch her then was to see visions, her colouring was

so delicate, her magnetism so definite and compelling. Effie, dark, slim, with eyes that could frown or plead; with the wit and argument of the schools transmuted by her intelligence into quips before which her opponents reeled — that was what one saw. And to see it was to understand how it is that visionaries can sway the multitude, and how one brilliant woman may draw thousands in her train.

She stood forth in this skirmish with Authority as the Champion of an oppressed section of the Nation — a leader who knew what was wanted, who would pursue that end and win in spite of those who sneered.

Listening to her, women recognized they were oppressed indeed. They acknowledged that man with the aid of man-made law was the cause of that oppression. And the medicine she offered which was to end all this, which was to free the professions, transform lives and radiate the homes was votes for women.

So great a mountain from so small a mouse. An effort herculean in itself to win the thing which man treats with disdain; as of less account than his seat or stand at the weekly football match. The argument went deeper than this seems to suggest; for it is idle to suppose that women of the calibre of these leaders refused to read what had already been written in the book of government. They had read and plotted on the knowledge gained. It is set out statistically that of the volume of those who may vote, only a third, sometimes less, trouble to do so. And the comment ran — That is how man does his duty. Give votes to the women who are keen and undulled by sottish indulgence. They will change all that. They will make the man who refuses to stir his stumps a laughing-stock, a person who takes no interest in government and

may stay at home to mind the children while women legislate so that life may become pure and fine.

And the protagonist in this fight, for her mother was growing tired, was a girl who satisfied the eye of those who came to see her and stayed to hear. A girl whose colouring and training were the gifts of her brilliant mother; whose beautiful contralto, wit, and ready humour were legacies from her father, who, despite his qualities and his wealth, perhaps because of them, preferred his own path to the stars and took it.

So, the stage is set and there enter now the players with their story, their influences and cross-influences; their predilections, their desires, their *mise-en-scène*, all magically acting and reacting one upon the other.

CHAPTER II

PATRICK M'GRATH

IT was during the early days of this movement that Destiny first thrust forth its warning finger; but Effie did not see it. She was not thinking of Destiny, but of itinerary. She was, in fact, in the first flush of the applause which falls to the successful lecturer, singer, actor — any or all of those who face an audience across the footlights. At the moment she was engaged in a strenuous campaign which she was pleased to call war. And she was still very young; absurdly young to be so absorbed in the ritual of generalship. What had stirred her to make war was out of sight, a force she did not yet comprehend.

Yet so it was.

Some folk develop early; others, to their lasting glory, late. So it appeared that Effie Massenshaw, when first romance came into her life — in spite of her precocity in other fields — did not understand quite what it meant; did not recognize its potency and would have been astonished had anyone pointed out how strong it was.

Now, in those early days it had become necessary to enlist the sympathies of America and if possible to augment what they were pleased to call their war chest. To that end Effie had accompanied her mother on a lecture tour through the United States and Canada. It had been strenuous, rather wearisome, rather mechanical; while the grate and jar of the platform ordeal had been more personal and intimate than is usual in similar conditions in staid England.

Perhaps they were both tired when they came at length to rest awhile at Vancouver, and recognized for the first time the immensity of that Empire they intended to arouse. Having come so far, it became necessary to halt and decide whether they would complete their world tour now or return to England and continue in the following autumn their journey to India and the East. They remained undecided for some days. Then a friend painted a picture of the Pacific Islands, with the Pacific as a 'sunlit lake' as *mise-en-scène*, and Mrs. Massenshaw promised to consider it.

The same night saw it decided. They acknowledged that the rattle and jar of the long railway journey to New York would go far to unfit them for the voyage to England. The trip would have to be undertaken in December. A shivery period — and the East smiled awaiting them with its 'sunlit lake'!

Then Effie thought it would 'rather cheat the winter' if they went home via the East. They would be in India during the best season, they decided, and taking the lift came out upon the roof garden of their hotel. They stared across a star-spangled city, contrasting the dust and noise of the transcontinental trip with the Pacific as a sunlit lake. The name itself was a lure. They chatted over the proposed change with an animation born of that wonderful air, weighing the pros and cons. Vancouver, British Columbia, was new to them both. It should have had a message for them; but they were in a mood to dictate messages, not to receive them, which was not the least of the curiosities noted of that memorable halt and discussion when years afterwards they considered it. Effie made the decision, smiling, her eyes alight at the prospect.

'It will bring us home in summer instead of winter' —

she ticked off the points as was her custom — 'we shall see India at its best, and it will give you the rest which is very essential after the fatigue of this tour. Yes — I vote for the Pacific.'

Mrs. Massenshaw, her hand on Effie's shoulder as they watched the glare of city lights advertising man's flickering nostrums in face of the patient stars, acquiesced. She knew she was tired. She was aware that a rest would be beneficial, as she phrased it, stressing it very lightly. The atmosphere of agents, hotels, and the hustle of a new world had tried her quite undeniably. It was the price she paid for stirring folk from their cow-like content; from that ruminant and grotesque attitude adopted by all sufferers, otherwise sane and alive, when existing under the law of their land.

Effie, less engrossed in the scheme of things, still staring into space, flushed, eager, a childlike gleam in her eyes, added:

'We should get a glimpse of Japan and Hongkong by going this way . . . and . . . Honolulu is in our track. It would be rather stupid to neglect such an opportunity of getting in touch with . . .'

She was dreaming again, her lips apart. A meteor fell over the distant sea. She followed it with her eyes. Mrs. Massenshaw, immersed in the methods to be adopted when she reached India, was scarcely cognizant of it or of her daughter. Then again Effie's voice called her to the intervening wonders — 'And there's Singapore . . . what a beautiful name, almost like a flower! It is right in our track . . . why do they give such names to things you can't eat? And — I believe I should enjoy a holiday with you, dear.'

It was the first time in Mrs. Massenshaw's recollection

that Effie had ever used the term. The holiday periods of others were usually employed in a vigorous burnishing of some neglected issue; some propaganda which had been put aside until a more opportune moment. Amazing! Here stood the practical Effie, seeing visions, at last! Mrs. Massenshaw was gently amused at the lapse; but she did not respond. She proceeded methodically to plan and organize, putting neat little packets all docketed and pinned ready for reference in that section of her brain which was reserved for them.

Meanwhile Effie with the help of a large-scale chart had succumbed to the witchery of names and the unknown glory of the East which is our bane and our delight; inscrutable, malignant, full of veiled tears and roses. She remembered the books she had read, their insistence on its amazing reds and greens and yellows, its silk and frippery; pomp and abasement. Pictures from the 'Soul of a People' came to reassure her and others showing man at his worst, his best obliterated by the sack of cities, the slaughter of individuals, beliefs — all thrown pell-mell to assuage his appetites. Pictures which showed woman truly at the beck of her master and pathetically ready either to worship him or to bare her breast to his blade, abject in her trained humility to the lord who stood over her and gave to her the impulse to reproduce his species.

They sailed early in December and came presently to the anchorage at Honolulu.

To move across the Pacific, from the vaunted freedom of the vast cities of Canada and the United States, to the tradition-held lands and jungles of the East, is to taste Elysium. It is a world education which should be part of the curriculum of those who contemplate Office and aim

at the honour of ruling an Empire upon which the sun never sets. By no other process is it possible to gain the essential perspective or to discover the meaning of caste, or what Custom is to those whom we designate 'Natives.' Effie discovered this early.

Honolulu troubled her. She seemed burdened despite her youth and the eagerness with which she searched its beauties. She had thought of these islanders as blacks, but she saw they were fair and of a beautiful symmetry. She saw also the degradation which had touched them as a result of their contact with white men. She gathered something of the attitude of these men to the women who bore them and remembered what had happened to those nations upon whom the Cross and the power of Spain fell when they came in contact on the threshold of the new world.

Yokohama and Tokyo opened her eyes still wider. Hongkong, which they entered by the wonderful Pass of Ly-ee-moon, provided further lessons. She saw the paddy fields; the uncounted thousands who dwelt in junks and sampans relying on the potency of a dim god, in a dim box space aft, where joss-sticks burned to keep them from peril by drowning or typhoon. She saw the little slant-eyed babies slung on the backs of women who plied the oar while their lords stood solemn at the helm to steer. Caught a glimpse of where the coolies live when the godowns and the paddy fields no longer need them. marvelled as she was drawn hither and thither in a rickshaw to see the teeming population at work, and learned how little food was necessary to keep them vigorous.

So they passed on and came by way of Singapore and Penang to copper- and brown-skinned natives of Burma and India. A race of small men peopled the cities of

Bengal they touched; slim, wiry folk showing dusky faces under curious straw-plaited hats of a singular artistry. People with patches on their foreheads, rings in nose and ears, and often weales. And here, too, women were the carriers and workers still; the labourers in field and go-down; the bearers of the world's burden concurrently with their own.

This phase annoyed. It was pitiful, and it was in evidence everywhere in these 'primitive' lands. Mrs. Massenshaw used the adjective to denote 'ancient.' She pointed out how Western civilization hides these things, cloaks them from our eyes with our system of doors and windows, how we assume that behind those barricades nothing untoward occurs.

Then one night on the roof of their hotel at Lucknow, mother and daughter spoke for the first time of life and a woman's share of it. It seemed a very threadbare business in Mrs. Massenshaw's hands, nothing sublime or enduring, and Effie came to understand the ordeal through which her mother had passed — long ago, while she still lisped and played with dolls.

It was in a new mood, then, that Effie passed through India and arrived at its Western gate; a mood which may be termed revolt or contempt, as you please, but stood definitely in her mind as a vocation. The forces which had produced this inequality must be destroyed. Man was at the back of it all. Supreme and indifferent he stood over it, defended it, laughed outright at those who would alter it.

Bombay, the city where East faces West and West looks in to greet her, was seething under the soft touch of many soothsayers and scarcely in the mood to soothe this

wanderer from England burning with a new indignation. Man was perhaps more nakedly alive to his perfections here; more godlike whether in his immaculate white or the robe of a Parsee — fat or gross, slim and trim, all were of one calibre. She looked through them as they, it seemed, looked through her, in a spirit of absolute antagonism; the spirit of an age which has outrun the older wisdom and seeks in the maelstrom something which shall compel its reincarnation.

Together Mrs. Massenshaw and her daughter had observed glimpses of wonderful colour and an amazing fecundity. They had walked amidst the men and women of races strong enough in numbers to sweep Europe to the Pillars of Hercules; yet were content to sit and chaffer with those travellers who came, guide-book and camera in hand, to snap-shot them. They had seen islands and the picturesque undress of the natives, sometimes in boats, or catamarans, sampans, the splendid activity of surf-swimming, and they recognized only a latent antagonism to the order of things as they were, Oppression waxing more definite as they moved.

They had entered temples whose history was lost in time, had seen, unmoved, carvings and the symbolism of gods too gross for portraiture. They had stood beneath the Tree of Knowledge under which the great Buddha sat to announce a religion which still holds fast a third of the human race; and they saw no reason why mankind should remain content with his overlords or with the false gods which were his. For a brief hour the Taj had inspired them and made Effie dream; then the Caves of Elephanta sent them forth chilled, full of wonder, but critical of the power vested in the priests who ministered there. And now they had returned to Bombay and for the last time

sat on the balcony of the Taj Mahal Hotel, looking out at the ship which was to carry them home.

She lay at her anchorage in the bay waiting, behind Colaba Point in the sunshine of a glorious day, the coming of those folk who were to exchange the glamour of the East for the glamour of a steamship which has, we are told, no glamour. Perhaps the negative originally was less sweeping. It may be that the iconoclast referred to steamships of a certain brand. Certainly the *Sobraon* still exercised her lure. For it was patent to all who watched her lying there in the sun glare, in spite of steam and the electric fans which did duty for sails and punkahs; it was visible in her snowy decks and awnings, her ports and scuttles, her wizard means of speech; her bosun's pipes, serangs, bugle-calls, and all the business of sailing day. And beyond was the brooding Arabian Sea she must cross in the quiet of the northeast monsoon — an echo of it in the word itself; in the singing and beautiful nomenclature of the bays and headlands she must pass; in the sunlit colours of the Red Sea, the reefs and islands, the dhows and desert stretching far to the north by Zafarana, Jebel Musa, and the emerald Gulf of Suez — glamour, glamour, in spite of the hectic life of cities, the tired world of those who chaffer in a Market-Place which fails of fascination.

Effie was feasting her eyes, forgetful of the dominant nostrums and engaged in a mental comparison of the P. & O. *Sobraon* and the *Empress* which had carried them safely amidst the islands of the Pacific. She was not critical of either vessel. They appealed to her as the dhows which crossed the harbour farther up the bay appealed. She remembered in Hongkong a junk which stole towards some distant joss-house in the early morning amidst a flicking of countless pennants and the crack of

unending squibs. All that decoration and futile racket to assuage the dignity of some joss who otherwise might rage! Then, close at hand came the crash of drums thrice repeated, followed by the blare of a brass band. She rose from her chair and stood by the edge of the balcony wondering.

A draft of men in khaki were marching up the Apollo Bunder on their way to the Arsenal or the Castle. Effie decided it was a picket on its way to relieve guard, but was mystified by the full kit of the men. Where were they going? In spite of her animus against militarism, she was attracted by the sight. The rhythm of their march was so perfect, so *galant*, and the music strangely reminiscent of some air she knew. She rejoined her mother as the men passed the Yacht Club, glamour to the fore. 'What is that thing they are playing?' she questioned, halting there, her eyes puzzled.

Mrs. Massenshaw did not know; she seemed unconscious of the band; but a man with whom they had spoken during their stay, looked up from an adjoining lounge and said —

"'It's a long, long way to Tipperary'" . . . Some music-hall tune the men have taken on. It's a sort of national anthem — these days.'

Neither lady had any knowledge of it. 'But why Tipperary?' they asked as he rose and stood beside them.

'Oh! Well — because it's green and cool and there are colleens there . . . Anyway they are a long way from it all.' He seemed to sigh over this truth.

'And you also?' Mrs. Massenshaw challenged.

'Yes.' He shrugged it out smiling over this recognition of the obvious. 'Luckily or unluckily there's no need to label us.'

Effie's lips gave her away at that. The man posed! They all posed! 'It's quite easy to see you are one of them,' she said by way of correction.

'Rather. Nothing else worth doing if you have money — and like order.'

'Militarism?' she challenged.

'Yes — if you prefer the term.'

He glanced up the Bunder to where the tender was coming alongside. 'A fine lot of men,' he said again. 'I'm proud of them . . . that's my little lot, too, among other things, and I helped to make them fine.'

Mrs. Massenshaw lifted her starers and searched this young man lolling comfortably against the balustrade. He took no heed of the crowd or of her. He seemed to be engaged in reading Effie as she had read him, but the task was less easy. He had recourse to talk instead.

'You are sailing in the *Sobraon*. I heard them saying so somewhere. So am I — and my men. I'm going home on — er — a sort of sick-leave — They are a draft from the Wexfords, my regiment . . . time expired, you know. It's lucky I happened to be here . . . got in touch you see before joining up! Rotten going out to join the lugger and knowing no one.'

'The lugger?' Effie questioned.

'In this case the *Sabraon*,' he smiled in reply.

'A relative of mine is in the Wexford Rangers,' Mrs. Massenshaw interpolated; 'is that the same regiment?'

'Yes — Wexfords for short or K.O.W.R. for long. What's his name if I may ask?'

'Captain W. R. Farningham.'

'Major, now,' said the man as he screwed carefully a monocle to outstare the starers. 'Good sort, Dicky. Tall, dark, Irish blood through the Featherstonhaughs . . .

splendid forward at polo . . . ever seen him play, Miss Massenshaw?’

Miss Massenshaw had not. She gave herself away by saying, ‘I don’t know that I have ever seen him. If so I must have been very young.’

‘If one may comment,’ laughed the man as his eyeglass fell, ‘you don’t look very old now.’

‘Oh! but I am,’ she tossed back. And for the first time a tinge of colour dyed Miss Massenshaw’s face and neck.

‘We will leave that to Dicky,’ he answered. ‘He’s my pal and a pukka soldier. He will be coming home next year, thanks be, and you will get your chance to see him play. Shouldn’t be astonished if he’s called in to play for England.’

‘If I had known he was stationed here,’ Mrs. Massenshaw fussed, ‘I should have taken steps to make myself known. Now, I presume it is too late?’

‘Not a bit. He will have finished tiffin and will be glad of the chance to get out of barracks. I’ll ring him up if you like.’

‘Oh, do!’ Effie put in. ‘He could see us off.’

‘He will be sorry to do that, I’m sure,’ said the man; but Mrs. Massenshaw could find no evidence that the words conveyed anything beyond the polite banality which the average male bestows on a woman.

Effie came nearer and held out her hand. ‘I shall be very glad if you will give him the opportunity to say good-bye to us.’

He took it smiling. ‘Right. I’ll go at once . . . but I am not saying good-bye. I thought I made it clear that we should be fellow voyagers?’ He stood at the salute, ‘Au revoir, then, till we meet on board. I’ll bring Dicky with me and he will introduce us properly.’

'May I ask . . . ' Mrs. Massenshaw commenced, but he moved away without having heard and she looked helplessly at Effie instead.

'Who is he, my dear? And what has he to do with Richard, my cousin, who it appears is out here?'

'He is a soldier, evidently. I suppose he is in the Wexfords also . . . '

'But do you know his name? That is what I asked.'

'He is Captain M'Grath — obviously an Irishman. It is a pity we did not know of . . . '

'How did you discover that?'

'I heard a man speak to him in the lounge — why?'

Mrs. Massenshaw was oppressed and said so. She thought it would be well to prepare at once to go on board. The man, whoever he was, would find them. Had he not told them he was to have the pleasure of accompanying them to England?

He did find them; but now that he was in uniform with Dicky Farningham beside him, Effie discovered less antagonism than she had imagined would be the case with a soldier.

The fact that her father had been a soldier, and that these men doubtless knew his history, compelled some change in her attitude. She did not argue the matter, nor was she prejudiced by his appearance. It happened: she did not know it had happened. She was suffering as always from the knowledge of her mother's position. At this time she was perhaps more on the lookout for slights than had been the case before; she seemed to expect humiliation at the hands of soldiers. Yet here were two men, both of good carriage and easy manners, ready to chat on any subject but war or the regiment. Ready to

give her aid, explain the ship's attractions, interpret the Lascar chatter as those red-sashed sailors went about preparing for departure — ready, in point of fact, to accept her views or to chop logic with the *sang-froid* of men who have travelled and are known in India as 'Sahibs.' Naturally this rather upset her preconceived opinion of soldiers.

Farningham was the first to strike a discordant note. He had been so long in India that he had forgotten the movement headed by these two most interesting kinswomen of his. It came, too, just as he was saying *au revoir*. He was walking with Mrs. Massenshaw, Effie and M'Grath leaning over the rail watching the moving launches and dhows. They drew together as a bugle sang for the departure of all strangers, and Farningham laid his hand on his friend's shoulder —

'Well — so long, old man . . . I shall be with you before the next hot weather. Look after Effie and see she comes to no harm or I shall have to do the paternal relative with a sting . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw frowned over this. She was on edge. Effie looked radiant and M'Grath a picture of health in spite of his sick-leave.

'I think, Richard,' she said in her cold phrasing, 'you forget that young women of these days require no guardians — certainly none of your sex. They are accustomed to stand on their own feet.'

'Deuced pretty feet they are, too, as a rule,' said Major Farningham.

'I do wish you would try to restrain that vein,' she urged.

'Sorry. I seem to have put my feet into it somehow, and they aren't pretty.' He laughed, waggling one of

them, clad in service boots, spurs, and leggings, for their inspection.

'They must be hot!' Effie smiled.

'You should be here in the rains,' M'Grath tossed out to avert thunder, 'then you would know something about heat. We go up to Kambala there, fling ourselves down and thank God for the sea.'

'Why?'

'Because it's the pathway home.'

The bugle sounded again and presently folk began to move towards the gangway. Farningham took Mrs. Massenshaw's hand and pressed it —

'We'll put it another way, Helena Farningham Massenshaw of Massenshaw,' said he. 'Patrick is a dear, good pal of mine and he wants a bit of mothering. He has been sick. Sick soldiers always want mothering. See to it . . . and,' in a stage whisper he added, 'he has more money than all the rest of the Mess put together. Think of it!'

So they sailed, and while Farningham went back to nurse the remaining Wexfords, Effie and her mother turned their attention to Captain M'Grath.

But they did not mother him. They were not quite the kind of women to mother anyone — especially in the tropics. Yet they made great progress between them in winning him for their Cause. He had never heard of it, but being a soldier on his way home he kept this to himself and got busy, as he would have said, discovering what the Cause meant. Mrs. Massenshaw was explicit enough, so explicit that sometimes Effie felt impelled to soften her statements, especially when she spoke of war.

Captain M'Grath enjoyed those moments. He wished for explanations hourly.

CHAPTER III

THE ROCK

BEFORE the *Sobraon* reached Gibraltar, M'Grath admitted it was unjust to withhold the vote from women who were taxpayers. He might have conceded more, but at that moment the signal station high on the Rock became active and a message came through to ask if Captain M'Grath were on board. This being answered in the affirmative, it became apparent that Destiny smiled and presently would act.

The Military Governor of the fortress at the time was an Ulsterman. He was one of those soldier chiefs whom M'Grath held in veneration, who stood for England in the seething pot of Europe and knew how near we were to war in the days when Lord Roberts was seeking to arouse the country from its lethargy.

When, therefore, an invitation came to M'Grath to visit headquarters, he ventured all on a cast by begging to be allowed to bring with him Mrs. Massenshaw and her daughter in order that he might show them something of the wonderful fortress which dominated the Straits. The General was in a genial mood. He had known this lady's husband, Major Massenshaw, and like other folk had wondered why the deuce Massenshaw had taken himself out of the Army. Doubtless, too, he knew something of Mrs. Massenshaw and her Cause. Perhaps he was interested in the question of votes for women and looked forward to the day when mankind would be relieved of the necessity of going to the polls. A signal came back at once con-

ceding permission and two of the trio started in high feather to see what only the few might see. Even Mrs. Massenshaw was constrained to admit it was an honour.

In truth she was becoming tired of ship life and of Lascar sailors trotting about on sticks which were the colour of chocolate, tired of serangs and whistles and bugle calls. It seemed sometimes to M'Grath that discipline acted as an irritant on this lady who aimed at disciplining the English-speaking world — but then, when all is said, M'Grath was in a mood for idealism, his feet soberly on deck, his head in the clouds, and could not be burdened by analysis.

With Gibraltar towering over them and Effie lost in the marvel it revealed, lost, too, in that ecstatic way which has been the birthright of youth through the ages, how could it be otherwise? Man makes for himself a beautiful Paradise in imagination and then sits down to fumble with the doors which keep him from entering. All sorts of reasons keep him outside. He does not read them. He tries the handles.

So with M'Grath. He saw the beauty of this girl's eyes and mind and pose: but he could only guess vaguely at the soul which was hid, beating against bars. He was puzzled by the glimpses she revealed; attracted and thwarted in turn. Was it always thus? Did women revel in obscurity, dalliance; or was it merely the skittishness of one finding new experience?

It may be that a realization of this attitude on the part of her young companions caused the irritation M'Grath had perceived in Mrs. Massenshaw. Or it may have been that she really was anxious, as she said, to get back to England and to her work which she feared had languished during her absence. Letters from her deputies told her

something; she inferred more . . . meanwhile as the ship would not sail until midnight she thought it would be pleasant to touch *terra firma* once more. Though how they were to stand anywhere on those slopes seemed a puzzle!

They stared up at its precipices as the launch carried them swiftly in and found the gradients less steep on this side than they had imagined. A car met them as they landed and speedily showed them it was easy to climb.

The C.-in-C. welcomed M'Grath as one does a countryman in the wilds. He introduced the ladies to his wife, put them in charge of an aide-de-camp, and sent them on a tour through the galleries. But M'Grath he carried off and proceeded for an hour to talk of Simla, Government House, and the new organization of the Indian Army, threw back and wanted to know what they were saying in the Clubs . . . and in the Bazaars?

He was disturbed, too, by the trend of events in Ireland. M'Grath would be at the Curragh. He must keep him informed of the Ulster fluctuations, he could call it nothing less. After all, it was Ulster that mattered. Carson was straight and would fight to the end, but how about the other side? He wished he could be at home himself predicating Ireland by this phrase. Things were getting out of hand everywhere. Damnably out of hand. There was too much talk of the right of the individual, and too little about the necessities of the Empire. After all, if we did not hang together there would be trouble presently — trouble with a capital T.

M'Grath found it all came back to that. Events were pending. In India, before he left; at Aden where he had been guest of the Mess; at Malta, and now at Gibraltar, the position in Europe and England's position in relation

to it was the one anxiety in the Services. At the same time all recognized it as the one subject on which civilians refused to think. What was to be the upshot? What about Ireland and the interminable brawls; the consciences, socialism, and the rest which some malign force was so busy considering and organizing. Who was at the back of it all?

M'Grath had his views and knew how to present them, and so for an hour the two talked rather as old friends than as C.-in-C. and a Captain in the Line. Then the General pushed M'Grath before him and handed him over to the ladies with —

'There, take him and make the most of him for the old country's sake. Presently you won't be able to catch sight of him. He will be busy. And so shall I — please God!'

'What fire-eaters soldiers are, General,' Mrs. Massenshaw smiled. 'Everywhere the same note. War, and the necessity for war!'

'I think you malign us there,' he returned. 'We are thinking merely of the skins confided to our care, and seeking the best methods of preserving them.'

He turned to Effie, his hands extended, holding hers as though he charged her. 'I am going to be busy,' he said. 'I should like you to think of Gibraltar as of a friend. The old Rock is worth a thought. This is the last month on it for any sort of comfort before winter. We shall have the Levanters on us in a few days, and then it will be sultry. So I have arranged to send you all to the Signal Station. You can see the Mediterranean from there... and Africa; the Pillars of Hercules as they were called — and that rather disturbing townlet, Algeciras. It is England's gateway to the East. It may be that your organization

will be able to help us to keep it — and help us pull the chestnuts out of the fire . . . What chestnuts?' He searched them with smiling, far-seeing eyes. 'Oh! Ask Captain M'Grath. He knows more than I do of their species . . .'

Thus it presently came about that M'Grath found himself with Effie Massenshaw staring at the golden track which lay beneath them — our pathway to the East; and watching the dun clouds towering high in the West — the shadow which lay over England. Yet for some reason no one touched on the question of chestnuts. It was present in their minds for all that; banished, pushed out, of set purpose at all events by M'Grath. The others may have been enthroned by the flaunted splendour of the night; but not M'Grath. He knew it and had gauged its subtleties, its efflorescence and its presage both here and farther East where perhaps its influence is absolute for all Service men.

The Rock lay in shadow at their feet; grey, blue, mauve. A sentry moving up and down not far away was silhouetted, purple against the chrome. Points of light gleamed from the twin towers snuggled far down the western slope. . . . It may be that when presently M'Grath realized he and Effie were alone, he saw the manœuvring he had accomplished in order that they might stand so — foursquare with the world to decide their destiny. Or he may have been blind to it; but Effie was not blind. She was conscious, yet malleable in his hands. She knew his desire and her own. Without volition it had come to this. In spite of her training, her passionate conviction that love from the man's point of view was merely the desire for possession, she moved

beside him thrilling; aware the thing was mutual; acknowledging each vibrating phrase he addressed to her by an answer, disjointed and intense which rang with the negation of wisdom.

Love! What was Love? Love was illusion, stupidity, a pastime for bucolics, the village swain and his *innamorata*, the dream which compels a Buddhist maiden to pick her lover and lure him to the fastness of their woods — that the race may continue; the phantasy which attacks men and kills women; which . . .

And at her side walked M'Grath who had inspired her, hurt her, and would tread on her — conscious only of her presence; of the power that drew him and of the entrancing scene that lay before them. He said in his heart it was a dream, and as he took her hand and caught her eyes lifted to his a thought flushed him that he might win.

He drew her to him; she made no effort to resist him. Words came easily, swiftly to his aid; words where Effie's name and love were blended; the old, beautiful song-words which sometimes mean desire and sometimes stand for the naked heart of life. She did not check him. She seemed to listen. His cheek touched hers with a soft caressing movement. For a minute she bent towards him swaying, radiant, then to halt her came like a stab the memory of her Cause, of her fight against love, and she drew away, calm again, mistress of her soul and of her lover.

'No — no! I shall never marry . . . please let us forget all that.'

He held her still, amazed — 'But that would mean the end of all things . . . surely you won't . . .'

'No — no!' again came reasoned speech, calm, un-

flustered. 'I want your help. I want it always . . . it is the one thing I desire.'

'But I love you, Effie!' He stumbled it out, seeking calm. 'Don't you see that it would be impossible for me to be always near you if you refuse to consider love?'

'Love is not everything in life,' she objected.

'It is the be-all and end-all of happiness,' he answered.

'You were interested in my Cause. You spoke of hearing me plead it and promised to help me. Surely it is not impossible for men and women to work together without the intrusion of love and marriage?'

'Faith!' he said simply, 'when the woman is Effie Massenshaw and the man Patrick M'Grath, I don't believe it is.'

'Then I am afraid I must agree — it is the end,' she said simply.

'That I will not believe . . .'

'You must.'

'Your voice fails you there,' he cried at that. 'I catch a hint . . . You will not condemn me to utter loss of faith . . .'

'I ask you simply to be a man and forget this rather silly interlude. I asked for friendship, for the comradeship a man can give a woman when he thinks with her and is at one with her in his detestation of the ghastliness which stalks the land, of the misery . . .'

'Faith!' he said again, 'and I hoped to win your love.'

'No — no! I offer you friendship — nothing more.'

'God knows it's as you will . . .'

She held out her hands. He took them, looked into her eyes, released them.

It seemed from that that she had won.

And from the sea before Algeciras came a beam of

light which focussed on the hilltop, grew intense, swerved and passed seaward to search an incoming steamer. For a minute she stood white against the dark of the sea, then other beams sprang out tossing long lines of white upon the sky, focussing, bowing, crossing a very witches'-dance of lights before which the gleam which first appeared waned slowly, its eye fixed unfaltering upon the East, waned and went out.

Then other lights continued to leap and pirouette, to cross and sweep the heavens with V's; to swerve, and scratch them as a striker who lights his pipe. And amidst them stole presently the gleam from Algeciras — white, steady pointing into the East.

And it was observed, by those who watched, that the beam from the Spanish side was of finer calibre than all those others which had twisted at its birth.

BOOK II
WAIT AND SEE
1912

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CHAPTER I
THE BACKGROUND

HYDE PARK is like the pied piper of Hamelin Town, for it draws all the world in its train.

It is beautiful, wild, untrammelled. The distances are so real, so deep, so blue, it must lead to world's end. The voices of its trees are so alluring only a forest could produce them. Rabbits, squirrels, and storks are to be seen in the vistas it provides. Birds from the woodlands nest in it, and the glamour and subtlety of its moods is as diverse as the faces of those who walk or rest in the shade it provides.

The seasons pass over it showing, each of them, their peculiar beauty. Sometimes it is a study in monochrome, sometimes dazzling; often a picture in lavish colouring flaming behind trunks and limbs of great trees that go back and back into a blue sheen which rises all about it, cloaking the sun. It is radiant, gloomy, and full of mysticism all in a day. The clouds chase over it as they chase over the sea in a westerly gale; white, bowling along. Smoke lies over it, thin mist, fog — and on each in turn light plays with the torch of a magician.

And beyond the Park are the streets, tall, grim, often hideous, and the despair of those who must live in them.

Sometimes despair enters the Park; but the woodland distances banish it, and you perceive it only when you peep beyond the trees and their carpet of cool green. At certain corners of it loafers exist and Anarchy spouts frothily on the lips of those who would fain stamp all men from one unchanging mould. Between the groups of Marble Arch and the blazoned wealth of Hyde Park Corner lie the whole gamut of human passion; the whole scale from anarchy to smug content.

Mrs. Massenshaw's town house stood with its back to Kensington Gardens — one of that historic Lane which runs from the Bayswater Road to Kensington High Street. If you climbed a ladder and looked over the wall at the foot of her garden you might see the swings and round-a-bouts; the see-saws and sand-heaps enclosed in a network of rails for the use of babies who live in the streets which lie in that forgotten section of London which is still known as Westbourne Park. Why it is so called is not apparent to-day. There are no trees in it, no squirrels but those of the human brand; only the fine old houses which went to make fashionable streets in the past, and are now let out room by room as lodging-houses for London's poor. They are let and sublet; crammed by those whom the City has drawn thither from the country and the swarming East. There is no grass there; only flat acres over which, on hot days especially, dust and filth and papers; orange peel and banana skins flick and disintegrate each time a bus or a motor skirls up or down town.

From the outskirts of this Park and sometimes from the heart of it march the folk who are workless and are banded together to compel Masters to pay uneconomic

wages; or failing that to persuade Government or the Humanitarians to provide them with uneconomic work, or doles. They are people who often are the tools of the Demagogues who speak for them, order their movements, and for whom they exist as counters in the game of life. They are very ignorant often, easily led, easily biassed, easily stirred. If you give them a band and a few banners bearing catchwords; promise them the millennium, the parish pump or a handful of bawbees, you may persuade them to 'process,' as they say; or on occasions to break the peace which folk know as 'Pax Britannica.'

On quiet days, when the sun is shining and there is nothing greater astir, you may meet a procession of children; clean some of them and tidily dressed; ragged others and wild in appearance, pathetically marching with their loaded perambulators, little wooden go-carts, or baskets on wheels, hugging their rags or the babies they are instructed to tend; carrying hunches of bread and jam, or bread and cheese, or dripping, wrapped in paper; carrying bottles of milk or gingerbeer, together with the roll of coats or blankets, towards that barricaded space at the corner of the Gardens where there are trees and squirrels; birds to shy at and sand for the little ones to dig or sleep in.

All this behind the high wall which screened Mrs. Massenshaw's lawn and shrubs from the trees and grass walks of Kensington Gardens; from the open space set with chairs, and the little kiosk where a band was sometimes gay and sometimes reminiscent of the cawing Rooks in Parliament.

Rather more than a year had passed since Mrs. Massenshaw and her daughter returned from India. During

the greater part of it M'Grath had been in London, but of late Aldershot had claimed him and Mrs. Massenshaw breathed more freely. At the moment she was in her dressing-room which overlooked the Park, and for a short space she had stood by her window staring out in the direction of the kiosk. She was preparing for a run into the country and quite oblivious either of the kiosk or the cage which held the children. Infantile shouts came down the breeze to her. She did not hear them. She was engaged in a mental survey of what she termed the growing friendship between Iphigenia and the smart young Irishman whose sole occupation had seemed to consist in lounging — that was Mrs. Massenshaw's description of the soldier's bearing — to the War Office, or Horse Guards, and coming back to his rooms or his club.

Well — thank God, a period was put to that! Yet in the seclusion of her room whence she could study, by using her eyes, the ways of men and maids in the deeps of the Park, she remembered certain signals which filled her with dread. If Iphigenia fell in love, the last straw, the straw which would break man's back, had been placed. Thereafter no consideration. Absolutely nothing but sledge-hammer blows on the bent back of mankind. From this the transition was easy. She put the question calmly, standing by the window, gazing on the beautiful trees in their spring dress — had Iphigenia fallen in love, and if she had was she strong enough to withstand its influence? Questions, these, a mother may ask only with sympathy in her heart; questions Mrs. Massenshaw dared not put to Iphigenia. If the girl had been Effie to her mother, then she might have asked; but the woman of wide experience and subtle methods of reasoning argued that silence was the master card in this hand which it

seemed the Potter had dealt to her . . . which was absurd.

She remembered, as she paused there scenting disaster, how often of late she sat alone, or with Mary Sladen, her secretary, for sole companion; how, after that excursion to the Rock, she came upon Effie in her cabin, sitting tense and miserable, with a photograph in her hand — like a lovesick maid as Mrs. Massenshaw phrased it in passing . . . which, of course, was absurd.

She remembered, too, how the girl appeared on the day they reached Plymouth. Then, again, she had caught the troubled look, the tense attitude as M'Grath passed clanking down the gangway at the rear of his draft. The men were boarding a Government tender of sorts, en route to some place where they would be herded and drilled and made into that coxcomb effrontery people called the Army. Iphigenia looked tired — yet denied she was tired; looked unhappy when she said she felt braced to renew her fight; looked ready to cry when she waved a final *au revoir* to M'Grath as he steamed away. Which, once again, was absurd.

Well — and after that?

In retrospect Mrs. Massenshaw saw that for some months M'Grath had gone the way of all men, taken himself out of their life — very wisely moved from influences which no doubt he felt were dangerous . . . And after that? Again there came a day when he was seen in London, seen quite by chance, 'called' and became interested in the Cause which Iphigenia had preached so assiduously. A certain sum transferred from Captain M'Grath's account at Cox's to Mrs. Massenshaw's 'party fund' testified to his feeling in the matter.

In the meantime Iphigenia seemed to have adopted Alan Wassiter's favourite attitude — she had become

enigmatic. Mrs. Massenshaw found her more difficult to understand, more and more immersed in her work; but gay once more — getting back to the business of life . . . and Alan Wassiter was there to help her enthusiasm. If there had been any stupidity with that soldier, Mrs. Massenshaw argued, watching her daughter, now that she had become enigmatic, it had been forgotten. And that, too, was absurd.

Then, as it happened, Wassiter chose to go abroad, which was annoying. Letters reached Mrs. Massenshaw from Paris, Berlin, or Petersburg, much more often than from London — and in all of them he found time, in spite of his immense work, to send a message to Iphigenia and the Cause. What precisely his work was, Mrs. Massenshaw did not know. But he was a busy man, a man of wide influence, great attainments and commanding personality. In truth he was one of those lucky, or unlucky folk, who on being called to the bar could afford to sit down and amuse himself. A brief *per se* failed to interest him. If one or many came his way, doubtless he accepted the burden as he accepted his fees; but his mode of easy luxury seemed to suggest that clients were unessential.

Some people when discussing him were of opinion that he had more money than sense; but they were wrong. Wassiter had more sense to the square inch of his person than the majority had to the square of their Chambers.

He was brilliant, a man of critical attitude, steeped in literature, and deep in the confidence of the leader in this question of Votes for Women. Mrs. Massenshaw counted him as one of her most trusted advisers. Beside him men like Bland-Tompkins, M.P. for Great Blundelham, were midgets. He towered over them as a poplar over a mountain ash — intellectually; but not in stature. There they

towered, for he was of middle height, middle age; square shoulders, hairy, dark; a man whose features were cast in the Jewish mould. A sceptic, unmarried, unlikely to marry, and a most excellently safe person, if Mrs. Massenshaw had brought herself to consider him from that angle, to associate with Iphigenia and keep her from the madness of her sex. She remembered how he had handled that idyllic affair with Edith Clifford, and, rumour said, others.

And having decided these points Mrs. Massenshaw drew on her furs and descended the stairs to reach her car.

A procession, not of babies and perambulators, was passing the end of the drive, beyond the Lodge gates where a man in the royal livery stood watching. He was perhaps less concerned with it than with Mrs. Massenshaw, who halted in her car while it passed.

It was a tawdry affair in the way of processions. Police mounted and on foot good-humouredly shepherded it. Men marched on the farther sidewalk carrying bamboos at the end of which bags dangled. These were thrust up at the windows of houses where folk appeared, to the passengers standing on the top of halted busses; and sometimes coins jingled in them. Other men walked along the pavement shaking tin boxes, which held money, in the faces of those who struggled in the opposite direction. A band far down Bayswater Road banged out a march, which mingled with another approaching from Notting Hill. Between, and no doubt beyond either band, marched the draggle-tailed folk; dusty, tired, with very little notion of alignment, four deep, jauntily in squads, the men known as the Unemployed. At stated intervals Comrades

carried banners bewailing, or threatening on green or red backgrounds, their sorrows. Others carried flags which were red and without device or motto.

The second band approached clanging out the 'Marseillaise' with a maximum effort on the part of big drum and cymbals. When it was nearly abreast of the Lodge gates, Mrs. Massenshaw spoke to the chauffeur, who instantly opened his door and walked towards the edge of the pavement. He craned his neck looking towards Notting Hill Gate, came back and gave his message.

'The traffic is stopped,' he said with just sufficient intonation to proclaim his foreign descent. 'If we wait till it is clear, we shall be late. It would be wise, perhaps, to go out by the ozzier way.'

Mrs. Massenshaw gave assent and they turned for the run towards Kensington High Street. 'How long will it take?' she questioned, drawing a rug about her.

'If we pass wizout much stopping over the bridge at Hammersmit, two hours and a half ...'

'Very well. I leave it to you ...'

'As Madame decides.'

The car was a Fiat, the chauffeur a personage, no doubt, of discretion. It did not occur to Mrs. Massenshaw to question him or to ask credentials of his employers. He drove as one accustomed to the English methods, stopped if a policeman barred the traffic, moved with a whirr of changing gear when the signal bade him pass. Quite discreet. Eminently respectable, as witness his last phrase.

As a matter of fact Mrs. Massenshaw was less at ease than appeared. Since her return from the East, she had discovered her position to be more serious, judged on the financial side alone, than she anticipated. The Cause had

many enemies. A new Association of Women had come into being, whose object was to defeat those who strove under the leadership of the Massenshaw family. At its head was a well-known committee of Englishwomen who seized on every little stupidity of the party who were out for votes and made capital of it. The papers were fairly divided between these two sections. The comic journals pulled a puppet on this side and on that keeping with amazing dexterity their positions astride the fence. No unbiassed mind could ask for more. Nor was Mrs. Massenshaw, on this splendid evening in early April, considering that. It was finance that troubled her, kept her sleepless and made her doubt her powers. America had not responded with the whole-souled fervour she had anticipated; Canada walked on stilts; the East had money to spare only for those who would work to free it from the domination of Europe; especially the austere rule, as it was coming to be called, of England under the Imperialists.

Now these courses no doubt were essential to that hegemony which aimed at releasing nations from England's grip, only that they might be snapped in the bonds of someone who knew better how to administer Force. Injustice certainly existed. There were inequalities in these countries even as there were in England. Mrs. Massenshaw's organization admitted it; but it had its remedy, its sovereign cure for all gradients. In effect it stood forth resolute to do one thing at a time, to emphasize the necessity which confronted them now, while all the world yapped of it, and gain the vote. Given the vote, the rest would come. It would follow as certainly as day, night; as hour, hour. Peace would no longer be in the balance. The stupidities of our Foreign Office, a

thing of the past; the scandal of Ireland a matter to smile over; law, order, freedom on the side of the angels, and those who had brought it into being recognized as only those may be who have been a long while buried . . .

At her side the chauffeur leaned a little towards Mrs. Massenshaw saying in his curious phrasing —

‘At last we pass ziss bridge, Madame, of Hammersmit . . . it ees perhaps an omen . . .’

‘Of what?’

‘What we strive to obtain an’ perhaps do not in our life obtain . . . Madame has been in India?’

‘A short while — yes.’

‘I myself was for four years in India at the bidding of my Chief . . . I see much in zat time which made me sink . . . Va!’

He put on speed and came between two cars which suddenly appeared to block his way. The god who ruled his destiny smiled on the effort; but Mrs. Massenshaw failed to smile.

Already it was dusk, the clouds barred low down by crimson light which peered through the curtain which veiled it. The chauffeur was busy making up for lost time, his passenger wondering whether this new method of annihilating space was quite all its votaries claimed for it. In her own car she was accustomed to dictate the speed at which she desired to travel; but here she was helpless. In some way the man behind the wheel had impressed her with the view that he would obey the chief who paid him and no other. She said in a tone which would have sounded strangely weak on the hustings — ‘Where are we now?’

‘I sink, Madame, perhaps Geelford.’

‘How far have we still to go?’

'Perhaps seexty mile . . .'

'So far?' She seemed to gasp the question to this Jehu who drove her.

'A bagatelle wiz ziss car,' he assured her. 'Perhaps forty — I know but little.'

'But how long will it take?'

'I put Madame before ze door of my Chief in time for dinnaire, or I die.'

She looked at him. He did not smile. He was busy with his levers as he rushed at a hill which stood like a black barrier against the clouds.

'Ziss is nussing. What you call ze play of children,' he announced as they clanged brazenly upward.

So they proceeded for more than an hour. Mrs. Massenshaw tried to take note of their direction; but as the darkness increased, this became impossible. The roads presently gave way to lanes and byways, the turns became exasperating; the speed at which they moved dangerous to a degree Mrs. Massenshaw had not contemplated.

In the half light, as they came from the place designated Geelford after having climbed the hill, she imagined they raced down the long slope beyond Newlands Corner, and she was able to distinguish certain landmarks. But soon they were upon the plain again, switch-backing, in the most reckless manner amidst hedgerows which seemed designed for murder.

To Mrs. Massenshaw, sitting quiescent beside Jehu, it appeared likely they would never emerge whole. She was not nervous. She was strung taut, braced for a fall and expecting it at the hands of this personage who had 'spent four years in India at the bidding of his Chief' and had seen much to make him 'sink' in the interval. She

resented the fact that she was dependent on him now, and prayed, if anything so illogical may be attributed to her, that what was to happen might happen speedily. No maiming — that was all she asked. Let it be swift — swift as their progress through black darkness in the maze they had entered.

Trees now stood on every hand. Where there were no trees, bushes climbed to shut them in. They obtained peeps occasionally of trunks which vanished swiftly as the road they traversed. She sat there with lips in line, ready for all ends provided only it were swift. She would ask no question of Jehu. If the man spoke, well and good; if he remained dumb — so much the better. He turned on a second headlight which seemed to have emerged from the bonnet on the pressure of a button, and in the added light she saw down a long radiance a kind of track, such as the farm carts make in the fields, lying in two distinct furrows which by chance fitted the gauge of their car.

Grass grew long on each side, bushes, tree-trunks in solid phalanx, weeds, hemlock all passed in swift chiaroscuro as far as the eye could reach. The lowing of cows presently came down wind, the cry of cock pheasants warning their mates. Nothing else. No houses, farm buildings, passers. All dead black beyond that stream of light which lit the trunks, until at a bend in the ruts they turned into a shrubbery and espied the red glow of three or four casements and the dull flare of a fire waning and growing through the open hall door.

Three notes, one long and two short on a horn which gave out a perfect fourth, heralded their approach, and at the back of Mrs. Massenshaw's mind the knowledge stirred that it was not the horn they had used on their journey; but another — singular and unusual.

She pondered a moment on this, and the voice of Jehu as he opened the door met her at a tangent — ‘Madame is, I hope, reassured . . . She is arrived in time for dînaire . . .’

She made some reply, her eyes taking swift note of the bonnet whence the searchlight had emerged. The words were automatic; so, too, was the knowledge gained — that now no searchlight existed.

She mounted the steps and entered a wide hall, considering these things. A manservant bowed her in, switching on lights and touching a bell at the same moment.

A woman, white-haired, but erect and sallow, dressed in black silk, approached to welcome the traveller, saying in a softly modulated voice the words which custom ordains; then, calling a maid, gave her instructions to take Mrs. Massenshaw to her room.

As they crossed the hall from the fire where they had been standing, a man in evening dress emerged from a door on the left buttoning his overcoat, while a servant moved beside him carrying his stick and hat.

Mrs. Massenshaw paused instantly. Something in the attitude and bearing of the man told her she knew him. In a moment she turned from the staircase and advanced holding forth her hands.

‘Alan Wassiter, I am sure! . . . I did not know you were in England and I find you here . . .’

‘Mrs. Massenshaw! My very dear friend, welcome home again —’

They turned simultaneously, it seemed, or nearly so, and for the fraction of a minute a note of surprise prevailed. Then the man, who long ago had been the hero of Edith Clifford and cast her, came forward and took Mrs.

Massenshaw into his care. That was what appeared; but somewhere behind those basilisk eyes Wassiter recognized his limitations. He knew that Mrs. Massenshaw did not quite reciprocate, as he put it mentally — while Mrs. Massenshaw on her side was content to dismiss analysis and consider the man.

Well, he stood before her, a person of middle height and Jewish externals with the usual nose; dark, low forehead; hairy, sinister; a face in which she adumbrated a mingling of Slav and Saxon with perhaps the Slav predominating. The upturned tilt of his eyebrows emphasized this when she considered it. She pursed her lips as the fact recurred. And there he stood, holding hands and saying again — ‘Welcome a thousand times . . . but I find *you* here — is it permitted to ask why?’ French, Polish to the finger-tips — which?

‘Had I known where to find you, you would have known why. I sent a note to your club — which received no answer you will gather — and, as matters were pressing, Mary Sladen called on my behalf and found —’

‘I was in Paris and a stack of letters awaited my return. I admit it and I express my sorrow. I imagined you still in India with your daughter, who I hope is as well as I see you.’

‘Well. Yes — we are robust. We gain strength and weight simultaneously — but I keep you. You are going out?’

‘To Town,’ he smiled. ‘At last to dear London and the daily round. But you have not told me what you are doing here?’

‘At long last taking your advice, my friend.’

‘Which? — Where?’ He shrugged it out with just

sufficient grace to push home his acquaintance with France.

‘That which referred to the sinews of war.’

‘Then you have seen Vorovsky?’

‘I am to meet him here apparently.’

Wassiter turned to the housekeeper who stooped over the fire — ‘Is that so, Mademoiselle? I gathered Monsieur Vorovsky was abroad.’

‘Madame is mistaken. She is expected by Herr Teichmann who arranged Madame’s visit in Monsieur Vorovsky’s absence.’

Mrs. Massenshaw turned abruptly to Wassiter, speaking rapidly — ‘I confess I am puzzled. Can you spare me five minutes where I may explain matters and obtain your advice?’

‘Certainly’ — he glanced at his watch. ‘I have half an hour. It is very much at your service if Mademoiselle can give us the library for a time.’

The housekeeper answered and led at once, opening a door adjoining that from which Wassiter had emerged. The two entered and found seats near the fire.

It was a large room, oak-beamed and wainscoted, three sides being occupied by shelves filled from floor to ceiling with books. In the centre was an oak writing-table; a bureau of exquisite design stood between two diamond-paned windows which looked on the shrubbery; on the far side of the hearth was an oak settle.

Wassiter had drawn a couple of easy-chairs to the fire and now stood leaning over the back of one while Mrs. Massenshaw raked him with the lorgnette she sometimes used.

‘What house is this?’ she asked point-blank.

‘Vorovsky’s — as far as I know.’

‘Then who is Teichmann?’

‘A partner in the Dutch-Swiss Bank and his very good friend.’

‘Where is this house situated? What wood is that I passed through?’

‘Ah! that’ — he shrugged it out, and crossed to the hearthrug, where he stood straddle-legged regarding her with his enigmatic smile — ‘I fear I cannot explain — somewhere south of our London, no doubt. You see me here for the second time only, and . . .’

‘Did you come down by car? Forgive me, I must know more.’

‘Yes — on each occasion.’

‘Theirs?’

‘*Exactement* — and by night. Why do you ask?’

‘Because I wish to satisfy myself, not only of the power of these people to give me their aid financially — as you advised they could; but *why they are interested in my Cause*. What can be the object of men with names like these — Vorovsky, Teichmann, and yet another — Zaneschagin, in a cause so English as mine . . .?’

‘Zaneschagin!’ Wassiter laughed openly. ‘Well, I know something also of Zaneschagin.’

‘Is he the novelist?’

Wassiter crossed and again seated himself in the chair. He was careful always of his phrases and preferred to give them their full value. He leaned back now, his fingers pointing V-wise above the arms of his chair — ‘I have not yet decided whether to call him novelist or chemist,’ he averred, ‘but we speak of the same individual. He is a Russian, not wealthy, who lives here, I understand, at the desire of Vorovsky.’

‘And Tinevala?’

'You have heard of him also? I must commend your detectives. Scotland Yard should be interested in them.'

'It is — but the Baboo, you know him also?'

'Yes — I have met him. Sounds like a label for a new brand of chutney . . . but he, too, is literary; a blossoming Rabindranath Tagore, no doubt, who is befriended by these rich ones. A hobby, perhaps, of theirs.'

'And what do you think of these people — all of them?' Mrs. Massenshaw pressed again, using her lorgnette.

'To be quite honest, dear lady, I would rather not discuss them. I prefer to trust, and in this case, if you consider my opinion of any value, I should advise you to trust also — if you *require their help*.'

She swayed slightly in her chair, her eyes closed, her usually straight lips twitching. She would have preferred any course rather than this. Trust! A system long discarded, bitterly resented . . . one of the stock phrases employed by men. Still, she was concerned with her Cause and the necessity of supplementing her resources in order that generations of women yet unborn should wield power over man by her vote. That was what she saw. The new power in politics. It was quite useless to argue that the vote was not wanted by any except a small minority of fighters, that the majority would refuse to use it when it was theirs. She gave it as her view that it was vital to make folk want things. Discontent was essential. Discontent, envy — anger! Only so could you lift the masses from the degradation into which they had been forced by man-made law. They must be compelled to want things so badly that they would rise in their wrath to obtain them.

She glanced up and saw her friend's eyes narrowed to thin slits, but piercing in their regard, the face with its

broad, low forehead, above a moustache and beard greying generously, which seemed to point to the Slav, to something Eastern and sinister in his features, which under certain conditions were stressed.

They were stressed now, yet his voice said kindly —

‘You understand I am interested in this Cause for which you have fought so splendidly, and will perhaps appreciate my sorrow that Tompkyns has, by withdrawing his support, placed you in this difficulty. It was to aid you that I ventured to suggest Vorovsky and his partner. They are strong financially. They are cosmopolitans. All financiers are cosmopolitans . . . I need say no more, except’ — he sat jibbing at his lips with the apex of his joined fingers — ‘except that from what I know I argue they are friendly.’

Mrs. Massenshaw rose and held out her hand. She was a woman of quick decisions, accustomed to weigh what passed the portal to her brain. Again, she had read Wassiter, weighed him. There was no occasion for further discussion. Besides, money was essential.

In a few words she said as much and they parted, Wassiter to his car, or the car which had brought Mrs. Massenshaw hither, Mrs. Massenshaw to greet Herr Teichmann; the car and its strange chauffeur kept out of sight, as one may say, while greater matters were discussed.

CHAPTER II

LEADERS AND LED

A **SPLENDID** day was passing to noontide heat, and the rhododendrons at Hyde Park Corner were attracting those lucky or unlucky folk whom Marble Arch denounced as the 'idle rich,' when Jag Haines came hot foot from the Albert Dock to meet his sister at the Corner. He did not object to the call which brought him; but he did consider folk should keep an appointment — and Madge was late. Therefore Jag Haines cooled his heels, as he said, for half an hour, while the sun maintained its heat, and he was compelled to be content, while watching the 'idle rich' in their movements under the trees, with wishing he could join them.

Some took life easily, others moved briskly, probably on their way to lunch, but few passed without a glance at the colour so lavishly spread against the green. Across the way Achilles maintained his truculent poise against the woodland screen which hid him from the Row — a Mark of the Beast to some, of Beauty to others. Park Lane simmered in a hot specimen of the climate every Englishman loves in spite of the criticism launched upon it by folk known as globe-trotters; perhaps because of it. Far up by the Arch a few coatless and perspiring orators harangued of the various Schisms, and of Government, to people too bored to listen and too hot to evade the jangle. The police took notes as they always did, some languid arguments failed to stir them, while afar off standing on a grass plot a girl shrilled of peace and the women's war in an ironic crescendo of hate.

High above them all swept the ducks which nested by the Serpentine — chaser and chased.

Jag saw them pass. He was very tired of waiting. Their passage made him think of the Sunderbunds and certain bags he had helped to fill at times when there was less light in the sky than that which now fell on Achilles. He took a chair and sat digging at the gravel with his cane until a white-clad figure carrying an absurd imitation of what once was known as a parasol halted just within the gateway.

‘Madge for a dollar,’ Jag pronounced as a brother should, stretched, got up and crossed to meet her, his wrist watch exposed to confuse her.

He was tall, fair, and clean-shaven; Madge a replica in Dresden China, less tall, blue-eyed, eighteen, and quite unmistakably English.

‘Hallo! Kid,’ said Jag, but he lifted his hat.

‘Hallo! Jag,’ said Madge.

‘Thought I was in the soup, old thing,’ Jag vouchsafed as they moved towards Piccadilly. ‘What’s adrift?’

‘Trains — and Dorothea’s coming up . . . thought you’d like to see her. Let’s go and have lunch — I’m simply starving,’ Madge announced.

‘Right-o. So am I. It’s too hot to walk. We’ll have a taxi — er — what is Dorothea up for? And when?’ He lifted his hand to hail a cab.

‘About four o’clock. She’s in the procession. I’ll tell you about all that when we have had lunch. I simply couldn’t until I’m fed,’ Madge explained.

‘Then we’ll feed,’ said Jag. ‘Get in. Where shall we go?’

‘Piccadilly,’ said Madge because she knew she might.

‘I’m not a millionaire, but it will suffice,’ Jag smiled, ‘for once, mind. Never again.’

'You're a dear! Jimmy wouldn't have stood that,' Madge smiled, her arm in his as they sat. 'He would have sung me a song about a man who lived beyond his means and ended his life potting glue in an almshouse.'

'Sit tight!' Jag admonished. 'This gee's going to buck.'

As a matter of fact the man had stalled his engine, but the car did not buck when they got going and Madge only looked up to say — 'You're a brick, old thing! I was simply dying to go to the Piccadilly and I believe you knew it.'

They reached it in due course, entered and found a table; found something to assuage both hunger and thirst, had a cup of coffee, smoked a cigarette. 'For this once only, mind,' coming from Jag, and towards three o'clock found it was possible to stroll up towards the Park.

It awaited them quite peacefully in spite of the orators; the tatterdemalions who had listened or slept, the girl who had shrilled of peace, and the policemen who had taken notes. Others, who had helped to swell the group which stood to listen, had gone away to collect the doles which a paternal Government considered their due. So the Park was less full than before; but from each boundary came the hum of London's traffic, that musical diapason which drones so naturally in our ears when we sit beneath the trees to sleep or read.

It was an hour which the South knows as siesta, but in England is often more strenuously utilized. It was so on this day of days for the Women's Cause. Far and near crowds were marching Park-ward through London streets. By rail and tube and bus they arrived, 'fell in' and marched as though the Kingdom depended on their coming. Perhaps it did. Jag, as he listened to Madge now that her hunger was appeased, seemed to think it serious;

for you see he belonged to one of the three families who had done more to bring about what was now passing than any one else in the country.

They were Surrey folk, people living within a few miles of Dorking and Leith Hill. The Nesbits of Low Willows, the Haines of Shackleton Rectory, the Massenshaws of Wych Elms, Palace Way, and Massenshaw, far up beyond the Border. Of these perhaps the two former had been the more active members until recently, when by a throw for power Mrs. Massenshaw had come to the front and stood out for all to see as the one woman who knew her mind.

The upshot of this now trailed very brilliantly in London streets, all converging upon the road which lies to the south of that section of Hyde Park where the rhododendrons and Achilles keep watch.

The traffic had been stopped when Jag and his sister came past the Corner, bound like the rest to Albert Hall. As they walked, Madge commented on the dresses, the bands, and all the paraphernalia of Demonstration. Then it became impossible to talk or to do anything but watch the banners and listen to the bands. A vast crowd had assembled to see the show; a jovial, critical crowd who knew something of processions and often damned them. But this they did not damn. They waved hands and handkerchiefs as the women streamed past, cheering those sections they knew. It became impossible to walk. Jag, with Madge on his arm, seemed like to be impelled upon the processionists. But that would have prevented him seeing Dorothea when she came — and apparently he was there to see her.

In the roadway a cavalcade of mounted police jingled, pressing through the crowd. They came from North

London by way of Marble Arch, which was now deserted, and as they moved the pressure became extreme. Jag scarcely liked it, was less than sure he ought to permit Madge to take part in a procession which compelled this show of Force.

'I don't care about this kind of thing,' he said. 'The crowd's too big for you to be in it.'

'Why?'

'Might easily get swept away — that's what.'

'Oh! But we've got to see it now we are here,' Madge protested.

'Right-o! Cling on — we'll edge back a bit, yet, if you don't mind my saying so, I don't care about your being in it.'

'The crowd? Why not?'

'I think these pals of yours are going too far,' he said. 'What is it all about?'

'Votes!' Madge laughed as they forced their way back. 'That's what comes of your being a sailor. You are out of everything worth being in, and in the one thing everyone considers not worth considering.'

'Don't try to be funny,' Haines commanded. 'What's the matter with the sea, anyway?'

'It's wet,' said Madge, 'it's never still — and it drowns people.'

'And railways smash 'em. One end is as good as another, isn't it?'

'Nonsense. There's only one thing I like about it, Jag, and you know it. It's your uniform.'

'Livery,' Jag sneered.

'It's not. You don't say it's that. Who did?'

'Jimmy. Ask him.'

The cavalcade jingled afield and the pressure be-

came less intense. They drew back to the portals of the Park.

'Jimmy!' She looked in her beautiful wrath as though she would slaughter Jimmy; but after all one cannot slaughter one's second brother because he has snubbed one's first brother, and because . . . oh, well! it simply wasn't done . . . Madge had learned a great deal from these two, even as they had learned from her and from Dorothea, who, it appeared to Jag, they were to meet somewhere presently in this Show; why and wherefore he did not pretend to know. But it had been said. Then, as he fumbled over this, a new question arose with Madge —

'Well — but where is Jimmy?' she asked.

'Just appointed to the *Ajax*, one-striper . . . cock-of-the-walk in the gun-room if I know anything, and death on all snotties,' he told her.

'Death on you too, by the sound of it, Jag.'

'No — my forsaken kit. Come. It's thinner again. Suppose we see what it looks like a bit farther up Knightsbridge — then I can decide whether I'll carry on or go back.'

'Right you are.'

They continued their way slowly, Jag piecing together the various bits of information he had gleaned, as a man does who suddenly finds himself launched upon the unknown, after trafficking with 'natives' and the Eastern scene. Madge marched beside him sure that the procession was passing now with less difficulty. Authority it appeared had got control once more and the Women's organization had done the rest. She was elate. Her eyes glowed — great pools of blue; violet in the shade. She longed to be with those girls, marching in the perfect formation which they had attained, flags and banners

waving, the various contingents clad in distinctive dress, with badges to mark their sections. But to Jag they looked less buoyant. Tired, dusty, is the description which came to him, and that in spite of their jaunty step and military formation.

One of the leaders, stout, flushed, and riding astride, appeared suddenly spurring to the head of the column. Cheers greeted her as she rode, jogging in true military fashion and carrying a short truncheon — perhaps a baton — which rested on her hip, sidelong, thrust out.

‘A Field Marshal?’ Jag Haines commented, smiling. ‘Who in the world is she?’

‘Mrs. Naylour — surely you remember? General Naylour’s wife — farther down than we are. Close to the Sevenoaks Section . . .’

‘I thought none of them had husbands,’ Jag tossed back oblivious of the inference. ‘Good Lord! It’s a rank travesty . . . No, I draw the line at that sort of thing. It’s mockery — and what can the mob think?’

‘Aren’t they cheering her?’

‘Obviously. But wouldn’t they cheer anyone who made game of this rotten Government?’

‘Oh! Don’t spoil it, Jag. It’s no end of a show — and Dorothea’s in it.’

‘Doretta . . . walking?’ He stood quite still shouldering the crowd from his sister, his breath troubled.

‘Yes. Do come along or we shall never get a seat.’

‘A seat — where?’

‘Albert Hall, dear boy. I gave you the tickets. Didn’t you know she had joined up?’

‘No. How long?’

‘About a year.’

He asked nothing further at the moment, but it was

easy to see he was troubled. Doretta! That was his thought. Doretta marching somewhere in that crowd. Doretta, who could do no wrong. Who was alive and vivid and prepared always with a reason for his Whys? . . . for Jimmy's Whys also. Poor Jimmy! Luckily a one-striper on the *Ajax* and busy with snotties. Anyhow he didn't know! He moved on for all that, holding Madge's arm and presently asked — 'How in the world could I know? I'm just in. Haven't seen . . . anyone really. But what are they after . . . ?'

'Who?'

'All these folk . . . and Dorothea.'

'Votes for Women.'

'Oh! *That!*' He marched on angry. 'Of course I've heard of them. They were on the ran-tan before I sailed . . . but nothing like this. Who's running it now?'

'The Massenshaws, Lady Delany, and Edith Clifford.'

'What does the padre think of it?'

'Dad? Oh! Well, he calls them the Queasy Folk — now.'

'Sounds as though he had no use for them. Does he know you are up?'

'I don't know. I didn't tell him — you see he has so little sympathy with the Anti's and Pacifists that I thought —'

'It better not to ask him,' Jag supplied.

'Perhaps. I told Mum and she said I might if you would meet me — that's why I wired.'

Jag assimilated this. It accounted for, but did not entirely compensate him for the very strenuous hour he had put in in order to meet her. He hummed as he walked — some march that the band was playing far ahead. He remembered it was one that Dorothea had thumped out

on the rectory piano when he was last on leave at Dorking. They all sang it, revelling in its catchy tune. He wondered what it was, but refused to ask. Perhaps Dorothea was singing it somewhere in those marching columns.

'Well — but what are they going to do now?' he asked instead.

'Oh, talk! Try to frighten Government into giving us the vote. They're meeting at the Albert Hall and all London will be out in dinner kit to see them. It will be a perfect scream.'

'Hum! And where does Dorothea come in?'

'In one of the contingents — ours.'

'Marching?'

'Rather. She's one of the banner-bearers and her dress is a dream . . . mauve and green, you know, a sort of Grecian effect. All our crowd wear it.'

'Dorothea want the vote, too?'

'Of course.'

'What for?'

'To vote with.'

'Who for?'

'Oh! How do I know — any old thing, I suppose, that stands.'

'Stands for what?'

'Parliament, of course. Why, Jag, where have you been?'

'At sea,' said Jag. 'And on my word I almost wish I were there now.'

'Why?'

Jag did not answer. He marched beside his young sister, fair, pretty, English to the finger-tips, thinking of her in conjunction with Dorothea, her pal; thinking very

hard, what they would do with votes when they obtained them. Wondering, too, whether he had a vote. If he had, what he did with it . . . whether Jimmy, now a one-striper in the Navy, had a vote, and if so what *he* did with it. Whether the Navy sent out to collect its battleships and cruisers and steamed post-haste to port with orders to vote, for any old thing that stood . . . when the voting time came along — whenever that was . . .

But most of all he thought of Dorothea, in green and mauve, trailing as a banner-bearer through the dusty London streets when the rhododendrons and iris would be in bloom at Low Willows. He wondered how far she would have to walk, but put no questions. In Jag Haines's eyes Dorothea was Dorothea and could do no wrong . . . yet, she might easily be tired. He could remember how sometimes she had been tired after one of their interminable rambles on the Common and how he had gone home and brought out a go-cart and dragged her back. But that was long ago. Before he went to sea, before he left school; before motors and things now called bikes had come to throw dust in folks' eyes and make them swear.

He was so busy thinking of these matters that he scarcely noticed the increasing density of the crowd until Madge pulled him to a gateway and said — 'Come this way. There won't be half so many inside and we can cut them off before they reach the Hall.'

So they entered and walked fast under the trees until they came to the gilded monument before which all London wilts, and discovered sight-seers solidly planted at all approaches. In the roadway beyond, the procession was already debouching — Mrs. Naylour still astride her horse, one hand squared upon her thigh, her baton set, directing the various contingents.

Jag thought it supremely funny, but was too occupied to say so. He wanted to be in at the death, as he termed it, so that he might see Dorothea trail by and prepare sarcasm for the day when next they met. He was armed with two tickets for admission to the Hall. These Madge had brought with her and the police, recognizing the talisman, elbowed those who blocked the way. So in the course of an hour — towards seven o'clock, indeed — the two passed the barrier, climbed to their seat, and sat down to cool.

Outside in the Park men and women in evening dress were standing on chairs and drags, on the seats of cars and taxi-cabs; all along the route of halted busses, lorries, and the City's traffic, to see the women pass. From Hyde Park Corner to the Albert Hall the way was blocked except for the women who marched and were cheered by those who pushed through the crush on the pavements: adherents these, almost without exception. The exceptions cursed because as a rule they desired to go east, perhaps on business, and were swept west at the bidding of a maniac-in-chief known as Mrs. Massenshaw, or was it Lady Delany?

Inside the Hall was a constant flicker of cheering. Cries from the boxes and tiers of seats — 'That you, Elsie?' 'Tired, Mary?' or, 'Good for you, old girl!' as a shrill voice obviously young and vibrant retorted. The organ boomed out hymns — battle hymns; the bands came in and joined their clash of cymbals and roll of drums to the roar of full diapason, tubas, and the thunder of the open swell. And when presently the organ and bands played quietly a popular air, the people took up their burden and sang.

Once Jag espied Dorothea as she moved to her place —

but without her banner; yet he did not shout to her or applaud her entry. It was Madge who did that, nudging him as she raised her voice — ‘Why don’t you cheer? It’s Dorothea — and I believe she sees us . . .’

Impossible! That was the word flashing in Jag’s mind. ‘Even if she saw us,’ he said, ‘she would be too excited!’ — then brusquely, ‘Why — if these folk get what they want, after this — all any one will have to do is to organize a Show and force the Government to listen. The end of all things, my dear girl — nothing less!’

That was Jag’s view. But then he was a sailor, and men who have been in either of the Services have a hankering after a thing they call discipline, without which apparently ‘they find themselves lost,’ as one of them put it.

Madge brought him out of this vein without a suggestion of doing so — ‘Why didn’t you give her a shout?’ she questioned. ‘Don’t you like her joining up?’

‘Never thought of it, Kiddie,’ he answered at once. ‘Does old Nesbit know?’

‘I suspect he’s too busy with the stars to bother about votes. That’s why it’s so important for us to have them.’

‘When are they going to begin talking?’ he asked, sidetracking the question of Dorothea’s vote.

‘Pretty soon. It’s eight o’clock, I expect. . . . Thought so! There She comes.’ Madge pointed to the stage where a tall, slight woman with silvery hair came forward acknowledging the plaudits of her audience.

Everyone was standing. Handkerchiefs were fluttering in a bewildering way. Jag stood. He did not cheer nor move. He craned his neck to look over the shoulders of the group who had climbed their seats in front, and intended to remain there. He said, ‘Oh! this is the limit,’ and sat. Madge continued to shrill cheers.

So it went on for ten minutes by the clock. Then the grey woman raised her hand and silence came as by a miracle. Jag found himself re-arguing the question of discipline. Apparently they had it. Apparently they were disciplined to destroy discipline, in order that the crowd who cheered their progress through the streets, the unthinking, undisciplined crowd, should see how easy it was to knock Government on the head and roll it under foot. He wondered what they were after, as he put it, and presently heard. ¹

The silver-haired woman clad in grey and white, surrounded by her group of stalwarts, made quite plain what they required. They required the vote. All women were to be granted the vote on precisely the same qualification as men. Jag Haines did not know what that qualification was. If he had known it, he would have smiled. They made it plain through two hours and a half of tedious repetition, in brilliant, fighting phrases, that if Government haggled or argued any longer, woman would compel it to reconsider its attitude. They threw down the gage and called it war. They threw reticence to the winds and talked of weapons — they did not say which. They spoke of armouries — but did not say of what they were constituted . . . Yet, in a fine turmoil of cheering, they gave the world, the work-a-day world of England, to understand that they would brook no delay, make no more processions, speak no more arguments; but march with fire and torch through the length and breadth of the land, while God gave them strength, and fight for that thing for which hitherto they had prayed and done penance.

No more talk — that was the gist of it. No more argument. No more, by your leave. Just war. War to the knife with all the forces to hand. And — the devil take

the hindmost. Those were the arguments. Sane, every one of them. Logical, when you think of it, as the retort of a fighting minority, disciplined to destroy, to a slumberous majority, too heavy and prejudiced and supine to see what lay in the path before it: too inert to consider the wriggling and subterfuge of their fogle-men which had contributed to this *débâcle*; the opportunism which produced this flung-down challenge of the minority, hitherto classed with the alien, the felon, the idiot, and the lunatic — to fight mankind.

Elsewhere in that crowded arena, M'Grath and a party of officers sat through the long harangue noting the method of attack and the discipline of the force engaged in it. They had watched the procession and praised the organizers. It was no light task to get all these scattered companies up to the scratch, as they called it, from the beyond. Only a trained staff could accomplish it. They joked about various dunderheads in high command who would have made a hash of it, and gave the palm to those who had carried it out. Here they paused, their minds on the question of discipline, the essential discipline. They questioned the wisdom of so much thunder; questioned the perspicacity of the men who had allowed things to come to this pass; questioned the result if nothing were done now to halt the movement; then went back to their clubs and pretended to forget what they had heard.

M'Grath alone stayed to snatch a brief moment with Effie. She still held him at arms' length, though in melting moments she drew him with all the force of her magnetic touch. To-night there was, in addition, the force of her appeal given with all the grace and eloquence of one of Nature's orators. M'Grath had been profoundly

moved by her speech. Had he been nearer, and the occasion less public, he would have thrown wisdom to the winds and cast all on one further appeal; but because he had not been near when she thrilled him; and because he was an Ulsterman as well as an Irishman, now that they were together a moment, he suffered no lapse; remembered her desire, her offer of friendship and nothing more, when a challenge perhaps would have won her.

She was fresh from the plaudits of the vast hall where she had held thousands spellbound. How emotional she was, perhaps she alone knew; how beautiful the contralto with which she wrought miracles of sound, she could not know. For the gods have wisely ordained that music is to the listener, not to him who makes it, lest in an ecstasy of feeling the singer fail.

They came together at a moment when her cheeks were flushed, her eyes alight, and she moved with the conscious spring of success. She held out her hands.

'What have you to give me . . . praise or criticism? No—don't speak. Let me read it if I can . . . for I spoke to you.' They stood at arms' length so, M'Grath quiet, but with pulses throbbing as never before, awaiting her verdict.

It came at length, a little sadly, as she let go her hold.

'Criticism! The Scot in you, my friend, predominant in spite of tingling Irish blood. Criticism! Criticism! While the world rots.'

'Sorry!' He put it so in one ringing word.

'Not your fault, Paddy. You mean well, but you have been trained askew.'

'Askew! Surely —'

'All soldiers are askew. Even Dicky Farningham blinks at the world sidelong instead of straight. You

can't help it. You are a cog in the military machine — and if the cog doesn't turn to order, there's the block! *Allons!* Give me a minute in the air. One only — for I, too, must march or something may happen.'

'Where?'

'Anywhere. Queen's Gate — Heaven's Gate . . .'

He held her cloak and wrapped it round her —

'Come, then. Under the stars . . . give me your hand — there!' He tucked it beneath his arm, passed through a side door, and moved slowly down the street. 'Now — tell me what troubles you,' he pleaded, 'and forget criticism . . .'

'How can I? I aimed to win you to my Cause and I have failed. Let it go at that.'

'Sorry,' he said again. 'I cannot let it go at that. You are too brilliant to be dismissed with a word or a phrase. You are so brilliant, the good God knows I can't see straight . . .'

'Can't see straight — how?'

'Well — perhaps I don't quite mean that —'

'Then what do you mean?' She looked up at him as they passed under a lamp.

'Your magic. The magic of your appeal touches me and makes me forget the arguments I should use if I want to make you see the dangers that . . .'

'Forget them. There are no dangers.'

'When I am with you I admit it, but afterwards I remember.'

'Remember what?'

'That you are playing with fire.'

'Those who will not use the knife when life is at stake are poltroons,' she flashed back at him.

'Call them what you will, Effie; but remember my warning . . .'

'I hate warnings. No one can see the future . . . lead me back, Paddy — I must go to my sheep.'

He turned obedient to her desire — 'I wish there were no sheep. I wish I had come into your life before the sheep appeared . . . I wish it with all my heart and soul — and that's the God's truth of it, Effie.'

'I wonder?' she said, so softly he did not hear her speak.

For a minute they walked in silence, M'Grath swift to regret the leap he had made — then once again her voice thrilled him.

'Where are they sending you now — Colchester?'

'No — Ireland.'

'The Curragh?'

'For my sins — that's the truth.'

She made no comment except to say — 'You might be farther quite easily.'

'And would that trouble you?' he asked, his soul in his eyes.

'You know it would trouble me,' she returned. 'I want to keep you by my side — always — so that you may help me win.'

'Chained, Effie?'

'Why talk nonsense?' she flashed. 'Do I look like one of those who would chain you and keep you bound?'

'God knows you look the angel you are, no matter where the rest are found. Chained or bound — put it as you please — but I am on this planet to help you if ever you have need of me; and if you have no need, just to make-believe I think you have. . . . There! That's said. I'll away to my rooms and get packed for the Curragh . . . and' — he paused on the word — 'may the good God keep me — busy.'

CHAPTER III

THE APOSTATES

M'GRATH's prayer was answered. In a score of ways he was kept busy in that melting-pot of the British Army beyond Dublin. One cannot be an officer of so small an army as ours and remain idle. The smaller Authority kept it, the greater was its need for perfection. M'Grath and his brothers were occupied as never before in polishing the machine so that, if the event came for which they all waited, the enemy should find it efficient. How small it was, how hampered by years of cheeseparing, they dared not discuss even at mess, but in the privacy of quarters they made no secret of their knowledge.

The Ulster question, too, hung over them all like a black cloud, lightning flickering at its edges; not only with the officers, but with rank and file. And there discussion sometimes ended in broken heads and the cells.

Indeed the sway and ululation of the political game kept the men sore. They knew less and imagined more than their officers. The atmosphere when M'Grath reached his quarters was that of a thin fog through which divergent prophets saw shadows moving, but could not gauge their direction. Hence the broken heads and discipline known as 'C.B.' The Army meanwhile had turned its attention to tactics and a new method of fire which presently was to astound a nation.

If the air was charged with electricity at the Curragh, it was no less charged over London and the adjacent country which we know as the Home Counties. Here the

wisdom of politicians, angling to please those who drove them, had produced a new scheme for making strikes more beneficial to those who struck. It seems that Authority had long considered it essential, in order that all men might be free to work or play or fight as they chose, that the funds of trade unions should no longer be liable for the damage caused by playing — which is known in life as 'ca' canny'; or by striking. It laid down in point of fact an axiom which was Self-Determination in embryo.

If a man preferred to play or strike rather than work — well, in the horrible phrase then coming into use, 'it was up to the Government' to see that no one had the power to enforce payment from the funds of his organization, should he playfully burn a house, maul a policeman, or wreck a train.

These 'accidents' came under the head, by the new Act, of 'peaceful picketing,' which sounds funny and sometimes is tragic.

How far politicians when framing their Act saw into the seething pot they were creating, is a moot point. The Law has an uncanny trick of turning round to cock snooks at lawyers. Indeed, one may put it quite plainly that a law has only to be made in order that malefactors may know how to sin. On the other hand, politicians have been known to break the heart of a nation in order simply to attain their own ends. Those, in other words, whom the gods have decided to destroy they first make mad.

Who was mad and who sane in those tremendous days of 'Wait and See' will no doubt depend largely on the genius who is presented with the task of elucidating facts and giving them to the Nation in the guise of history.

Harold Massenshaw's definition of history, as the militant section of the Suffrage Movement were aware, was

very much to the point. He called it 'canned eels,' and, on being challenged by a heckler, rapped out —

'The devil wants your souls to ruin,
We desire your soles to mend,
If your soles have sprung a leak,
Try his 'eels'

— which was scarcely apropos. You may call it a red herring. But everyone laughed and the situation was saved.

Harold Massenshaw, Effie's brother, was something of a wag, who during the past year had come to the front. To see him on a platform, tall, clean-shaven, dangling an eyeglass and, if he happened to be sitting, twelve inches of mauve, clocked sock clinging between wind and skin, was to recognize the exquisite. He was so well dressed, his hands so effeminate, so manicured, his eyeglass so constantly up, and so constantly dropped, that you would never have considered him a fighter. But there you would be wrong. The angle of his jaw should have indicated his range. His blue eyes, usually smiling, should have pointed to his mother, the slightly Roman cast of features to her and to no other, and, as all the world knows to-day, she stood for Force.

He was down from college, not because he had been sent down; but because it was too interesting to be down to dream of going up. Debate in the halls and concert rooms of Surrey and Sussex was more provocative of amusement than debate in College. Oxford could wait; the Cause could not. His rooms were vacant; it did not matter, but the Cause did. He loved the Cause in the first instance because the mater had made it; now, be-

cause somehow it had contrived to put him in the limelight. He revelled in limelight. He was as glib with his tongue as Effie with hers; but in the music-hall way. He could make a jingle — he called it verse — or thump out the accompaniment of a song while facing the limelight, with the ease of one born to the platform.

At the moment he was staying at the Punch Bowl, the village Inn on the Common beyond Dorking — in order to speak on the new text to-morrow night at the Town Hall. His mother and sister were at the adjoining town of Guildford; Mrs. Naylour and the Pacifist M.P., Bland-Tompkins, Esquire, J.P., were there to help her. They were all speaking at the heart of the most beautiful part of Surrey, with Leith Hill, the Hog's Back, Reigate, Limpsfield, and Westerham, sections in battle array behind and beside them.

They were centred there because Bland-Tompkins's home, a place of ancient beauty called Stone Court, lay in the immediate neighbourhood. Only the wealthy can live hereabouts. The natives speak of these folk as 'millyongaires'; in a more advanced circle they are known as 'money-bugs'; but in the City — and it should know its kindred — they are called 'financiers.' Bland-Tompkins was a financier — his brother financiers said he had a bee, which is a bug of a different type and only produced by what other folk call a mental twist. They did not infer that it was an unwise action on the part of Nature to endow a man with the qualities of the bee *and* the money-bug; but that it was unusual. It also told them where to spread their nets in case he should fall.

It was a perfect afternoon. Sunny, breezy, fresh. White clouds sailed over the Common and drove lighted

by the westering sun towards Titsey and the farther Downs. Box Hill in the early trappings of spring gleamed like an emerald beneath a sapphire sky.

It was much too fine to remain in one's rooms at the Punch Bowl; so Harold towards three o'clock found himself on the rectory lawn at a moment when Mrs. Haines was expecting guests. As Madge Haines in a white frock and a bandeau, to control her hair when tennis claimed her, was on the lawn beside her mother, Harold made no bones about it, as he would have said, but just butted in.

'My luck, Mrs. Haines,' he said as they met by a marquee. 'The hotel was insufferable. Flies. Midges. Onions. Stables! Couldn't stay there. My rooms face an angle where the smells and things become composite. Just turned me out . . . How do you do, Miss Haines . . . but I see you are expecting friends — so I must make my escape before they arrive . . .'

'No — no — why?' came from mother and daughter at once.

'Oh! I'm down here on the war-path, you see. Wouldn't do to be caught among friends. Some of my saintly followers would long-face me, as we call it — couldn't pull 'em much longer than they are, though, when I think of it . . .'

'Mrs. Naylour, for instance!' Madge laughed in comment.

'Oh, the Naylour isn't a bad little thing. My wigs! Didn't she do the General the other day . . .'

'Sit down . . . Rather . . . Where were you?'

'Sort of orderly, no, aide-de-camp — sorry! Mounted. Didn't you see me? Thought I was *the show* all by my lonesome, until now.'

'You were,' Madge laughed. 'So was I by the time I

reached the hall. You should have seen me! . . . Oh, and here come some of the folk!' As Mrs. Haines rose to receive her guests, they sauntered across the lawn, chatting as before. 'It was a squash! I should never have got there only Jag came to the rescue,' Madge cried out. 'Lucky he was at home, wasn't it?'

'Rather. Hum — how did he like it?'

'He said it bored him stiff.'

'Thought so. That's the worst of this rotten world, no one is interested in anything but games, or their own special ointment, in case they happen to get bruised.'

'Yes, I know. Where's Mrs. Massenshaw?'

'On the stump . . . Guildford Town Hall.'

'And Effie?'

'There too. I've got Lady Delany with me and Edith Clifford. We ought to rake in quite a crowd between us. What does your father think of it?'

'The new methods?'

'Yes.'

'He says he refuses to think of them, and threatens to excommunicate us if we carry on.'

'Not really?'

'Really and truly. You should have heard him when he read dear Mrs. Massenshaw's speech. *Times*, you know, rubbing it in. He says he'll see the Nesbits too and get them out — if things go as he expects.'

'Sorry! Well, well — it seems I shall have to use my influence with him, poor dear! What are dads given us for, my child — eh? Tell me that.'

'I'm not your child!' Madge laughed and coloured over the denial. It was an old joke — one Harold never failed to remember.

'Thanks be you're not,' he laughed back. 'Ah, there he

is!' He indicated a group crossing the lawn to meet them. 'By the look of things I'm in for a hot time,' he added, then turned and sauntered towards them, his hands dangling a hat at his back, a gold-topped malacca under his arm, his monocle swinging cheerfully from side to side as he went.

'Lady Delany's with him,' he announced rather gloomily, Madge thought. 'Where in the world did she find him? And who are the others?'

'He has a knack of getting hold of the right people,' she answered. 'The others don't count.'

'The man in sky-blue dust-coat — quick! Who?'

'Mr. Nesbit — surely you remember *him*.'

'Not in that hat, dear child, not in that hat,' he hummed, and a moment later halted, bowing very creditably, the supreme centre of a group.

'My dear lady,' Haines was saying as they joined forces, 'when a young and healthy girl not yet twenty-one declares against marriage, her people should consult a doctor and not send her to the hustings.'

'Scarcely the hustings, Mr. Haines, surely?' Lady Delany cooed. 'Harold — he is attacking our sister. What are we to do?'

'Defend her — naturally. How do you do, sir . . . by the merest accident I am here. Hotel insufferable — beer, onions, several brands of horseflesh all in my room at one moment, pushed me out — and when I remembered your delightful garden I came.' He struck an attitude. 'Mr. Nesbit, charmed to have the opportunity . . . but what has my sister done? Who has asked her hand in marriage . . . I — I' he stammered very creditably — 'Look here, sir. If she has, you know, and hasn't said Yes, why — when all is said and done she isn't very old — is she?'

'I don't like the argument she used. She was talking of marriage and the married state to people who were in many cases quite ignorant and ready to draw the conclusion they desired,' Haines said very quietly.

'Mr. Haines has been reading some garbled report, you see. It is most unfortunate these things get so twisted,' said Lady Delany; 'really one can scarcely recognize one's own words.'

'*Times*, Lady Delany — *The Times*,' Haines insinuated.

'And when was *The Times* in favour of Freedom, Mr. Haines, and the future of Democracy?'

'You link the two?' Harold asked.

'They are one and indivisible, surely?' Lady Delany asserted.

'Ah! to that,' Haines answered, 'alas! I have no answer. I prefer like Nelson to put my telescope to my blind eye. I intend to see nothing — except that I see no future for a Democracy which is already the slave of those whom it has put in power.'

'Don't you rather exaggerate the power of your future Democracy, sir, when all is said?' Harold questioned.

'On the contrary, I strive to ignore it. The present is sufficient. It is pregnant of forces which may unpeople the world. There is something terrible in the thought of this coming —' He did not say what. His hands went out, a small lift of the shoulders appeared and with it a smile — very far off.

'War?' Lady Delany took up the gage, as perhaps he intended she should. 'I do think you might leave us to deal with that stupidity.'

'Your Cause has my sympathy,' he bowed; 'but it seems to me you underrate its effect on mankind. You cannot compel people to do things without using force.'

Your cause aims now at being less pacific, if I understand these speeches, than it was; although originally it was an offshoot of the pacifist thesis . . .'

He stood a moment looking from one to the other for denial; but neither showed sign of it.

'Democracy,' he repeated, 'is a prehensile force if I know anything of human nature. In theory it may mean twenty things; but in being it means that a very large number of fools exercise what is known as political power — a power you seek to extend . . . I have no quarrel with that, provided you do not use force to obtain it. Women are as competent as men to make a mark on a little piece of paper and bury it in a ballot box; but you must not lose sight of the fact that behind the box which holds your vote and mine are persons who use the power you give them to promote their own ends; perhaps even to . . .'

'Surely you may credit us with some acumen in this, as well as other matters,' Lady Delany objected.

'I credit you with all you claim; but I assert you will be as powerless to prevent it as we have been. Big battalions will not give you security here, for you are not dealing with statesmen, but with politicians. More, these men know that the best way to obtain the suffrage of Democracy is to play upon its ignorance; to offer it the bone for which at the moment it is clamouring . . . You can't contradict it? Very well — on this knowledge politicians play with consummate skill. Some folk call that kind of thing opportunism; but as that has an ugly ring I do not bring myself to use it.'

Lady Delany with more sarcasm than before said — 'Of what value is knowledge, unless you use it to obtain power?'

'A Machiavellian argument surely!' he protested. 'It is imbecility in my opinion unless you are prepared to go all lengths. Remember the Chinese slavery cry of the other day . . .'

'That!' Lady Delany laughed. 'No, no, Mr. Haines, we shall not fall so low as that when we have power . . .'

'Nor,' Harold Massenshaw threw in as his friend paused, 'nor shall we adopt the attitude of the gentleman who apologized for it in the House, if we obtain office.'

'He covered a party lie with a quip,' Lady Delany decided.

'A large-hearted lie at all events,' the rector laughed.

'A Liberal lie,' she quoted, "'lacking the Conservative aplomb.'"

'Oh! but surely you do not mean to imply that you consider it fair to play with the susceptibilities of fools in order to obtain their votes?'

'Certainly! I would tread on them, sir, if need be, tread on their corns to boot, if occasion warranted,' Harold rapped out.

Haines faced him, horror plainly written on his gaze — 'Tread on them to gain power . . . surely you don't mean that?'

'I do, Mr. Haines. On every corn in the decalogue, if by so doing I could speed the day when we attain our end. I have no scruples. Those who are burdened with scruples can never win power. My mother's aim, now, since the politicians have lied to us — as you are aware they have — is to win or die fighting. For myself, I do not much care which comes. Our attitude is the only answer to that of the Government. It is ours, sir, and no power on earth, no Prime Minister with his little secret talks . . . no silly

chatter of an approaching revolution can move us from it . . .’

Despite their bantering approach, Haines knew now whither they moved — all of them. He knew that unless Government redeemed its pledges and let the electorate see it was honest, or strong, or both, or, at all events, something which no man can label opportunist, he personally must come out of this movement. He had long foreseen this throwing down of the gage. Government perhaps had manœuvred for it; but if so it must act at once. It could not afford to delay longer. There were forces at work in the background which made bloodshed and rioting inevitable — unless a strong man appeared and took hold of the situation . . . And where, on the horizon in the year nineteen hundred and twelve, was anything but ‘wait and see’?

‘Bravo, Massenshaw!’ Haines cried. ‘At least you advise me where we stand — and although I see in that decision a parting of the ways — I acknowledge your courage and your mother’s courage; but I mark time for the moment pending fruition. “The end justifies the means!”’ He tossed it out. ‘The old satiric phrase is yours. Well — I await events . . . but remember, if events fall as I foresee they must, your action will harm our beautiful England. I do not see how any of us can touch wood and hope to escape — if you persist in your course, and the Government permits you to escape punishment when you are arrested . . .’

‘You know, sir, how my mother values your opinion,’ Harold pleaded. ‘At all events, do nothing yet . . . nothing against us . . .’

‘No, no. I await events. That was my promise and I abide by it . . . Come, Madge, my dear, your mother re-

quires help — and I think the courts require players. I hate politics. They are not clean. And' — he turned directly to Harold — 'if you win power, try to get back what these Latter-Day Saints have lost for us. Tell your friends the Man in the Street is waiting for honesty.'

CHAPTER IV

CONFERENCE?

A COUNCIL OF WAR had been called and was in the midst of a session at Low Willows with Effie and her mother at the helm. They sat in the library turning papers and quoting from reports in a rather close atmosphere, the windows closed perhaps against draughts, perhaps against eavesdropping. You cannot be a conspirator or threaten to hold up the Nation's activities without being subject to these drawbacks.

Outside was sunshine and cloud shadows racing swiftly from bed to bed down a vista of splendid blossom. Dorothea was on the lawn — a breezy figure in mauve and dead gold belt. There were others, of course, but in Effie's eyes they did not count; von Schultz was there, one of the money-bugs! She shrugged with the thought. Well — Dorothea would be proof against that, there would be no difficulty there, for was not Dorothea, the gallant, the beautiful, really booked for one of the Haines boys? Dear Dorothea. Just a question of sex attraction . . . that stupidity which somehow contributed so often to the undoing of women. Effie sighed, glancing sidelong upon the lawn where Dorothea stood swaying back upon the breeze, the centre of brilliant youth. Sex! True . . . hence this eternal donkey work of papers and discussions which sometimes got out of hand; all the drudgery of an organization, take it where you will, which has to be done by someone.

It was stuffy in that room. Effie resented it. She was

oppressed, perhaps depressed. The business of rousing people to clamour for blessings, which they pathetically strove to understand, was inspiring by comparison with this dull affair of accountancy and finance. Even if she never made a convert, it was inspiring . . . besides, one was in the open. Effie caught herself on the verge of a yawn and snapped her pretty teeth upon it with —

‘Then there is this matter of which Harold made note.’ She glanced around and saw her companions waiting, expressionless. ‘Mr. Haines advises us to move slowly and to consider the Man in the Street when we obtain power.’

Lady Delany took this up — ‘Oh, but surely he understands the position — can’t he see we must ride roughshod if we are to gain what he calls “power”?’

‘As far as that goes,’ Effie cooed, ‘I fancy he forgets that when we are in power we shall have less necessity, even than our present Government, to consider the Man in the Street. He forgets we shall have behind us the votes of all those we have freed from the dominance of the Man in the Street.’

‘The people, my dear, who are going to give us power are as sick of the Man in the Street and his stupendous stupidity as we are ourselves,’ Mrs. Massenshaw put in. ‘Let it stand so.’

‘Yes, if you wish it,’ Effie conceded.

‘I do. I prefer it.’

‘I agree,’ Lady Delany rolled out in her sweetest manner. ‘In the language of the Man in the Street, the Man in the Street may go hang . . . when our position at the head of affairs is assured. In spite of that I am sorry to hear dear Harold’s report. Mr. Haines has immense influence with the county and his withdrawal now would be disastrous.’

'You emphasize "now,"' Mrs. Massenshaw said in her crisp fashion from her place on the window-seat. 'But I am inclined to dissent. I might have agreed a month ago; but to-day we stand on firmer ground.'

'May we know more?' Lady Delany asked.

'It was for that purpose we called this meeting,' Mrs. Massenshaw smiled. 'Read the minutes, my child.'

'Where is Mary?' Effie asked.

'I preferred to keep the matter between ourselves. Mr. Wassiter agrees, I think? Good,' she bowed her acknowledgement of his assent, 'and as the young people are out on the lawn I do not suppose we shall meet with any interruptions.'

'Can't we cut the minutes, Mother?' Effie asked. 'I'm as hoarse as a crow,' while with her eyes she watched Wassiter.

'Or, if it be necessary,' that tried exponent of finance put in, 'permit me.'

'I am sorry, my dear — No, there is no necessity, Mr. Wassiter.' Mrs. Massenshaw ruled. Then for a minute she sat in silence, her mind occupied with exposition. She shut the book, leaned back and spoke slowly with closed eyes in the manner she had made her own.

Outside the sun shone. The terrace at Low Willows, the lawns, the groups which moved upon them, were lighted at its touch. A peacock stood near a group of iris spreading his tail, wooing the sun. Dorothea's fine voice rang out in denunciation of something — Effie could not say what — and for a moment the group kaleidoscoped on the green like Egyptian dancers caught in silhouette, stiff, gorgeous in colouring, yet pliant with the grace of youth. The peacock moved majestically afield, his tail ambulating.

It was perhaps the last meeting in which the three families would take part, at all events there. It had been decided, without much sorrow be it said on Mr. Nesbit's part, to make London the headquarters in future. The Movement had grown enormously, of late especially, since the days when Nesbit, Haines, and Mrs. Massenshaw, with the help of certain obstructionists and Lady Delany, had taken the lead from those older members who had seen the small beginnings whence it sprang.

It had outgrown drawing-room advocacy. It was no longer a dream, but a Movement able to stir Governments; ambitious of power; strong, noisy, militant. Nesbit, being an astronomer whose nights were often given to the work he loved, desired quiet and had long ago decided that the Cause had outgrown his advocacy. He could not work at night if people came to make speeches which called for cheers outside his window while he slept. So the edict went forth, very much as Haines expected it would, and now Haines was to withdraw also.

Well, there it stood. It was to be henceforth a Woman's Movement indeed. No men would be on its committees, no men would hold office anywhere. If brickbats were to be thrown eventually, men might, no doubt, be permitted a hand there. Yet at this juncture, by some strange legerdemain, or was it chance? it seemed that Alan Wassiter had made himself one of that Inner Circle which was the Shrine, the Delphic Oracle, and Altar of Sacrifice to the women.

He sat, indeed, on Effie's right facing Mrs. Massenshaw and Lady Delany across the beautiful window which gave upon the terrace, lawns, and gardens. It was his first visit to the home of the Nesbits, but the Massen-

shaws he had known for years. Mrs. Massenshaw's clear tones and logical speech speedily put her hearers in possession of this fact.

'You know,' she said, 'why we are here. You guess, no doubt, that we have determined to meet in future in Town; but you are not aware why I have decided to ask Alan Wassiter, my old and tried friend, to give us his assistance at this juncture — when as it appears we break away from the trammels and constraints which hitherto have held us . . .

'Well — it is due to you as well as to him that I say why this has come about. I will do so at once. Since we last met, when, you remember, the question of finance first became important and we decided to seek further aid, I have been in touch with the men of whom I had heard, and of whom I have spoken with you privately. I was not aware that Mr. Wassiter knew them. I met him at their house and he will tell you how it came about that he was there . . .

'For the rest, provided you agree to leave me to act solely as I think fit in all matters connected with this question of finance, I can promise it will not hamper us in future. We shall move from victory to victory until very soon I foresee Government will be compelled to give us what we ask.' She leaned forward a little, her eyes now on those who sat with her, her fine features alight with the knowledge that her request would be granted. 'I ask for a free hand,' she pleaded. 'I seek power to deal with these men as I wish and on those terms. It must be thus — or not at all. That is my decision.'

There was no dissent. Scarcely a moment seemed necessary for consideration either with Lady Delany or Effie. They recorded their votes quite calmly and Mrs.

Massenshaw recorded her thanks. It was very simple. Amazingly simple. Autocracy for the asking!

'And now, my friend,' she added, her eyes on Wassiter, 'perhaps you will be so generous as to explain why you are anxious to aid us at this moment.'

'Obviously, Mrs. Massenshaw, because otherwise the Movement would collapse,' he shrugged out smiling broadly.

'That may or may not be true,' Lady Delany challenged right and left, 'still' — she removed the sting here — 'I do not think your answer quite covers the question . . . does it?'

'Please!' Mrs. Massenshaw lifted one hand, and at once Wassiter accepted the plea or ignored the challenge — which you will.

'I am anxious to help, if you permit me to say so, because your Movement is for the good of Democracy. You tell me also you need funds. Well, if I am able to influence these people, you must understand I do it because I do not know why a good cause should be permitted to die for lack of funds any more than I consider it essential that a Great Man should only be supported when he has been a long time dead.' He wandered afield, his eyes on the audience, master of his periods.

'The papers, I see, for instance, are adulating the fact that it is Adam Smith's bi-centenary to-morrow, or a month hence — why? Who was Adam Smith? What did he do?' He looked up with the satiric smile he knew when to use and went on — 'Cribbed the ideas and thoughts of men who were dead and put them into literary English. He wrote "The Wealth of Nations," a book of which Lord North said, "there is something in these subjects that pass my comprehension." And — as far as I remem-

ber — he was one of the folk who advised that we should give up the American Colonies, the West Indies, and would have had us surrender Gibraltar . . .’

‘One of the Queasy Folk, as our friend Haines calls us,’ Lady Delany interjected.

‘Quite so. A man with a literary style that made him famous or infamous, as you will . . .’

He remained silent looking round on these women a moment. ‘That is one of the curiosities of your Nation, if I may put it impersonally. Critics are all so busy appraising and analyzing the works of dead men that they do not perceive the danger they run of starving the living. Everywhere I hear the same. Your artists starve. Your literary men remain undiscussed until they are dead; then someone makes an anthology of their works and reaps what they have sown . . . That doubtless is the reason we shall be celebrating the bi- — or is it tri-centenary of Adam Smith one day soon . . .’

He leaned back in his chair, his arms folded, his head bowed, his eyes closed to thin slits, intense, as the phrase went in the years of æstheticism and cant.

Mrs. Massenshaw knew that look and was worrying it in a trice — ‘We are anxious for your views, my friend, on what for want of a better term we may call the financiers?’

‘Yes — naturally. Well, which of them in particular? Since you refuse my red herring.’

‘Zaneschagin, Teichmann, the man I met, by the way; Tinevala, Vorovsky — von Schultz, who I understand is outside. Who are they? What are they?’

‘People, I understand, dear lady, who are bent on dragging the Suffragette Movement into the arena of Political Revolution.’

‘Is that your opinion of them, Alan Wassiter?’

‘It is the opinion I must form as a student of nationality, taking as I must the divagations of the daily and weekly press as my guide . . .’

‘Aren’t you rather begging the question?’ Lady Delany asked.

‘They are very wealthy, Madame,’ he answered, ‘and you are in need of funds.’

‘And now you are fencing — really! I think we should know . . .’

‘I admit it! I admit it is provoking, but what would you? I cannot speak more definitely of the one factor in modern life which seems to be definitely indefinite! How can I? Finance, I take it, is something of a mystery. Certain people are spoken of as financiers. I have no personal knowledge of either one or the other; but if I am asked, on the occasion of a big overdraft becoming a matter of discussion between myself and my bankers, what I would do if certain other bankers or financiers proffered financial support — I say quite plainly I should accept their support and forget I had heard in the column of some newspaper that my financier was — shall we say, His Satanic Majesty attempting to accomplish my ruin? That’ — he shrugged it out — ‘in my view covers without unnecessary words the position in which I find myself.’ He rose as he said this. ‘I may perhaps be permitted a cigarette with my friend von Schultz, who I see is already on the terrace. The decision is for yourselves.’

He bowed as he paced slowly before the table, crossed to the adjoining French window, opened and went out.

Lady Delany was the first to speak. She looked at her friends and said rather lamely — ‘Well, what are we to do?’

'Accept,' Mrs. Massenshaw returned instantly.

'And you, dear?'

'Accept,' said Effie.

Lady Delany rustled uneasily with her notes. She was tall, slim but finely built, with dark hair and aquiline features. Her dress was grey and white, a great grey hat and feathers crowned her, as the feathered head-dress of an Indian chief is designed to give point to his warlike profile.

'I don't like the revolutionary notion at all,' she said at length and halted abruptly.

'If you mean bloodshed and stupidities on the pattern of France, I agree,' Mrs. Massenshaw sighed.

'I do mean that . . .'

'It is a contingency, I think, we need not anticipate,' Effie objected.

'Of course I should prefer a matter of this importance to be decided by us unanimously,' Mrs. Massenshaw urged.

'To be quite honest I am afraid,' Lady Delany answered, her elbows on the table, her fine Indian visage supported by cupped hands. 'I am very much afraid there is some truth in the suggestion made by Alan Wassiter. It is precisely the sort of underground operation a revolutionary body would attempt. It would seek to embroil us, and it is merely stupid to refuse to recognize that there *is* a revolutionary party with us to-day, and that it is using every opportunity to gain power . . .'

'Oh, you forget, you forget, Harry, do you not,' Mrs. Massenshaw put it so, 'your Karl Marx. The English are not a revolutionary people. They are the despair of all that brood, known to us as the Reds. We move in a different way. If our rulers are unpopular, we push them

off their stool by methods which are legitimate. We do not cut their throats, we cut the ground from under them. Personally I have no objection to this. It is given to man to choose his gods, and I see no reason why he should be compelled on the one hand to remain content with the god he has chosen, or, on the other, why he should cut his throat. Surely it is easier to upset the stool on which he is sitting? Make him look foolish, show him to the people when he is looking foolish. Explain to the people the nature of his foolishness — and, in England at all events, you have no need to see red, as they call it, or to fear the action of the Reds . . .

‘My dear Harry,’ she leaned forward using all her magnetic force, unconsciously, no doubt; but still, using it, to bring this friend who was the Head of her organization to agree. ‘You know my views. You know I have no revolutionary tendencies; simply that I am here now, at my age when I should be resting, to win what our whilom friends seem to be throwing away. I tell you we are on the verge of success: that if we accept the aid of these friends of Alan Wassiter we shall win . . . that if we do not accept it, we shall lose.

‘He was quite right when he put the matter so before us. He was right, too, in his warning. Very well. We accept with our eyes open and challenge the revolutionaries to move us one hair’s breadth from the course we have set before our people. Let that suffice. I stake my word on it — if you will stake yours beside mine.’

And then the inevitable happened as nature and eloquence have arranged. Lady Harriet Delany, picturesque, beautiful of profile and of dress, rose and took her friend’s hand, and Effie’s hand; very much as in Grand Opera the conspirators rise and sing to beautiful roulades

the trio or quartette which presently will bring down the curtain before an enthusiastic audience — but here the phrase was spoken, not sung; was plain, not complex; sane, not hysterical —

‘Very well. I accept that.’

That was all. The plunge had been taken and Effie Massenshaw was free to woo the sunlight or the shadow as she chose. She preferred the sun and took a straight course to reach it through the window which had opened and closed behind Wassiter.

He was still on the terrace. He had not sought von Schultz, indeed he seemed content to walk quietly with his cigarette for companion. Perhaps he waited the result of this meeting before finding Schultz; perhaps awaited Effie, or Lady Delany, with word of their decision. Nothing in his manner showed either anxiety or perturbation as he sauntered to the end of the terrace, halted, to sniff the freshness, perhaps, and in leisurely fashion turned on his heel. Nor did his step hasten one semi-quaver as he advanced to meet her.

She came quickly in his direction, paused and said, ‘Well — that is decided.’

‘For or against?’

‘For — unanimously.’

His eyes narrowed slightly, as though he read how unanimity had been obtained; but he said — ‘I am glad it was unanimous. Now, I suppose you will go ahead?’

‘Yes.’

‘You rejoice that it is possible?’

‘Undoubtedly. I dislike suspense.’ She turned, saying simply, ‘Shall we walk or do you wish to join your friend?’

‘My friend is amused,’ he said, ‘and may wait. The

day is young and beautiful. To-morrow it may be less beautiful — *n'est-ce pas?*'

They moved up and down the long terrace, Effie brilliant, alive, sniffing the freshness. Lithe she was and splendid in her sable colouring. One to woo, one to be wooed.

From Low Willows three counties may be seen. It might be said with equal truth that these three are as the Garden of Eden, or the Garden of England which is the name of one of them. Only Hindhead in the west, or Box Hill in the north, can challenge the sovereignty of the view. Kent, Surrey, Sussex lay in panorama before them as they walked, but other matters were between these two than scenic charm and the call of picturesque England. They faced facts which were less entrancing, less quiescent; a world seething, indeed, with the desires and disappointments of a people long-used by politicians as the counters by which they climbed to power.

Effie was not one to evade the issue. She gave point to it, indeed, by asking somewhat abruptly — 'Why don't you enter Parliament?'

And Wassiter with a swift gleam of amusement countered with similar brevity — 'Possibly because I am not a bear, dear lady.'

'Physically,' Effie said with her analytical manner, 'I may be permitted to question that. You can hug. What else is essential?'

'Surely, the wish to hug, is it not?'

'There are leaders in the House,' she argued, refusing that, 'you could twist into sanity, mentally, physically, morally, if you cared to exert your strength. You have what our American friends call "personality." Why don't you use it?'

'I have no desire to enter the bear garden,' he said at once. 'Your bears have a method of silencing folk which, personally, I do not appreciate. It is easier, is it not, to overturn a stool by kicking away its legs than by lifting the sitter? In any case why should I spend my strength on these people? Politicians fail to interest me. They lie.'

'Nevertheless, you might be of great help to our Cause if you would consent to stand. You are the one man, as I see it, who can counter their manœuvres. We will find the constituency and the votes to place you at the head of the poll. Won't you consider it afresh?'

He walked with a small stoop, thinking, it appeared, when actually he refused to think. Then, presently, with a rare smile, but without the banter that marked his earlier efforts, he said:

'I grant you all you claim in the direction of putting me in the House — but, how long do you suppose I could maintain my strength if I were there? The strain is enormous. Your politicians have a way of polishing off their opponents I scarcely wish to test. They kill them. Do you desire that I am killed?'

'No, no! I asked you seriously, Alan, and the least you can do is to consider your reply in the same vein . . .'

'Forgive me!' His hands went out; he stood a moment beside her. 'I think you scarcely appreciate that I am in earnest. Tell me — where are Plimsoll, or Parnell, or Chamberlain to-day? Dead, are they not? Why? Because they were big men fighting for their ideals. Politicians have no great admiration for ideals. Therefore they killed them . . . Do you wish me to go out that way?'

Again she broke in swift with denial — 'You know we

do not . . . You know, at all events, that I do not,' her voice rang with a new intonation, one she had not hitherto used; 'but we do want help in the House, now that it seems possible Mr. Tompkins will break away. We want it so badly that I venture still to press you . . .'

'But not sufficiently to wish me to sacrifice my life in the bear garden? No. I am aware of it. Oh! I trust you. Believe me, I am aware of your straits . . . Yet I say, leave that also to me,' he leaned towards her, dark, sinister; menace in tone and gesture; 'leave it to me! I can hit them harder from my study chair than from their benches. *Voilà tout!*'

And so, in spite of the day, they left it.

CHAPTER V

REPERCUSSIONS

THERE is an Eastern story which tells of Adam's restlessness in the Garden of Eden when God first gave him Eve; how he failed to understand her and complained to God that she was for ever teasing him; how God took her away, and how Adam when he was alone again sought out God and begged Him to permit her to return.

Then the story goes on to say that this happened three times, and that, when Adam came on the third occasion to beg for her return, God was angry and told Adam he must make up his mind, now, whether Eve was to remain with him in future or to stay away.

Then Adam tried to explain his position. He said he could not understand why it was he was miserable and restless when she was not with him; for when she was with him she plagued him so he was compelled to ask God to take her away. It had happened three times. Yet he prayed that she might be returned to him, for when she was away he was more plagued by her absence than he was plagued by her presence when she was with him and plagued him.

All of which goes to prove the commonplace of to-day and to show there is some reason for the restlessness of folk when, as the world puts it, they are in love. Observe, though, that in this case it was Eve, not Adam, who first showed her restlessness; Effie, who in spite of her activities resented the absence of Captain M'Grath at a time when that officer may be said to have had his hands quite full.

A man who is embroiled in the difficulties of training Ulstermen in the same camp with their enemies of the South; who, beyond and above the differences observable between men in the ranks, had to do with the more subtle discriminations of brother officers, some of whom were quite ready to send in their papers — has but little time for the consideration of so hopeless an affair as the love of a woman who has rejected love. How can it be otherwise? There are but twenty-four hours in one's day, a large portion of which is spent either in sleep or in work, and at the end of it most Service men, certainly those at the Curragh, had all those subsidiary duties to carry through, which rarely come under the head of routine, and are known as the 'donkey-work' of the British soldier.

Donkey-work is exhausting. Try it for a month instead of taking your leave and get your doctor to note the result. He will tell you you are burning the candle at both ends; that you must stop it — yet, strange as it may appear, the activities by which Effie killed her restlessness and aided her militant friends had their repercussions in camp and town, not only in Ireland, but in England, Scotland, and Wales; while across Channel, tossed somewhere in the background, France and Germany prated of effects perceived. One spoke of those mad women who were wrecking Pax Britannica and forgot the '*affaires*' which in their own country militated against a continuance of peace; while the other secretly smiled at 'those busy ones' who were moving so chaotically to 'the day.'

In 1912-13 those who ventured to denounce the laboured periods of Pacifists, the disarmament fiends, and those who by strikes and propaganda strove to throw obloquy on Government, to pillory Ministers and make

them quake for their majority, were called scaremongers by certain sections of the press, and fools by politicians. But the soldiers knew better. Sailors knew better. And the lack of co-ordination between the various units, the lack of material for bare defence, weighed on the shoulders of those who presently must command: who from camp and naval base sat helpless to watch the approach of 'Carmagnole' or war — but might not speak of either.

M'Grath was no less restless, despite his burdens, than Effie. He wrote often — little scrappy letters which said nothing of the stress he endured. Yet told her nothing she wished to hear. He had a minute from duty; he filled it by penning a note. He woke in his little camp bed discovering a similarity between it and the bed he had occupied on the *Sobraon* — instantly he was awake, her voice for brief moments chaining him. Then knowledge came. Sat with him. Told him not only of the dangers she braved, but the dangers she courted; the dangers she helped to bring on all those who would have to fight when the hour struck.

And then thought became unreasonable, danced by his pillow, and refused to lie still.

At these times in sheer self-defence M'Grath rose and penned sheets of special pleading; pleading for consideration, for patience, and, in roundabout phrases, for love. These letters he never sent. Sometimes he tore them into minute scraps, sometimes lighted his pipe with a page or two and watched them burn and twist into charred fragments while he anathematized the Cause which kept him from speaking what he felt.

It was the Cause which stood between him and happiness — nothing less, nothing greater, as he understood it then. The Cause to which Effie had dedicated her young

life — nothing deeper, though she scarcely grasped the fact. Had she not pleaded for his help, for comradeship; for his aid in the campaign upon which she and her friends were engaged? Then why these stupid notes which noted nothing? And since that pleading, what had he done to help her? In fifteen months, perhaps rather more, a few cheques had come, it is true, to swell the funds which aided her — cheques he could easily spare. Nothing else. Comradeship? Not a gesture. Sympathy? Since he had been in Ireland not one word! Effie resented the lapse. In her mind it stood for something akin to disloyalty — considered from the point of view she adumbrated.

Yet that was scarcely the picture which M'Grath visualized. His life hitherto had been that of an officer in the King's Army. Nightly he had stood to drink the first toast of the English Army. He recognized fully the meaning of that toast. He held the King's commission and honoured the King who granted it — how then could he be the comrade of one who aimed, perhaps — for the subtleties of thought led him far — at dishonour? In the last resort he stood for law and order, he put it so, while Effie, God rest her, stood for 'Carmagnole' and all it entailed. His difficulty always stuck there. It was a standing mental gibe which he seemed unable either to scotch or to disavow. Comradeship! How was it possible?

He knew he could not aid her except in the one way which meant so little to himself, and yet might be pregnant of results disastrous to himself and others. Hitherto his cheques had gone in the vain hope they might help her to win speedily and turn from her Cause to the business of life — love and motherhood.

Now, he was less sure — for it seemed there might be some obstacle of which he had not dreamed.

Before it came to that stage, you must understand that Major Farningham had arrived with the regiment, or that section of it which had remained in India, and now was at the Curragh after a week in town. During his short spell of leave he had managed to see Effie and her mother. More than once he had been at the new headquarters and had come across a chap called Wassiter, who seemed hand in glove not only with Helena Farningham Massenshaw, his sainted kinswoman; but also with Effie his cousin once removed and now removed for ever if this were true.

That is how he put it when he met M'Grath and they had their first chat; for Dicky Farningham and Patrick M'Grath were as brothers in that unit of the British Army which stands in these pages as the Wexfords. And to him M'Grath spluttered —

'Wassiter! Wassiter! Never heard of him all the time I was in Town. Who is he? What does he do?'

'Fancy he's an Israelite of some kind. Looks it. Man of middle height, square, hairy, dark — with eyes that have a trick of narrowing down to slits — not good to consider.'

'Doesn't sound very good to look at either,' M'Grath commented. 'Well — what's his game?'

'Lord knows. Something to do with finance or politics or both. Clever as they make 'em, too. Talks a lot — No, not in the House, though I gathered Effie rather wanted him there . . .'

'Wanted him there . . . what for?'

'Gas, I suppose.'

'Good at that?'

'Talk the hind legs off your chestnut, my boy.

'Lord, yes. It's a thing they can do . . . What — er — did Effie say?'

Then Dicky Farningham rose and waggled one finger in the air near Patrick M'Grath's face and said —

'So — that's it, is it? I heard something in Town. Come off it, Paddy, my son, or you'll burn your fingers.'

'Burn the devil!' Paddy was immensely *au fait*.

'Not the devil, I tell you; but your soul ease or whatever it is a woman gets between her teeth when she's busy with a Cause and has no use for a man . . .'

Then seeing M'Grath wilt, he added: 'Thought you looked pretty rotten when I blew in. Cut it out, old chap — now, while it's young . . . devil of a job later. I know.'

M'Grath looked up at this and said in a more hopeful manner, 'A bit late, I'm afraid. What's to be done?'

'Come and have a peg, and get into kit. It's nearly dinner time and the old man's in splendid fettle.'

'Yes — I want a peg . . . first to-day, too, although you may not believe it.'

'Bad as that?' Farningham questioned.

'Putrid,' said Captain M'Grath.

Then Dicky Farningham became M'Grath's father and mother and medical attendant. He took his arm, and led him away to his own quarters talking as he said afterwards like a nurse to a dyspeptic infant, till he persuaded him to 'take the Old Man on the hop and get him for a week's leave.' He added — 'I was talking to him an hour ago. He seemed troubled about you. Knows, of course, about your special complex, and wonders what the devil is to become of you if you take the Ulster business too

seriously. So do I, by George. I ventured on a hint. Thought a week in Town might pull you together. And if you can't put that into shape presently, don't tell me you're Irish . . .'

CHAPTER VI

MIDGES

YOUR Celt is always something of an enigma in circumstances such as these — for you perceive, of course, that the man's name, Wassiter, dragged in as it undoubtedly was, must at the moment be the one determining factor in the game of life for M'Grath now that Dicky Farningham had spoken it.

It is possible Farningham scarcely recognized the magnitude of his friend's disorder; on the other hand, it is more than likely after hearing his Colonel's view of it, which in effect amounted to a suggestion that M'Grath was weighing the question of getting out of the Army lest presently he be called upon to fight his brothers, explained it. It was a symptom of the unrest much in evidence during these years. Men were waiting to see, as they said, which way the Government cat would jump. They remained beside the wall, angry — bitter at the knowledge that presently, if the beast jumped as they expected, they would be compelled to send in their papers or take up the burden of coercing Ulster.

For once, it seemed, soldiers were taking some interest in politics.

It would be civil war, they argued; brother against brother; father against son; mothers, sisters, friends, relatives, all divided. Men said in effect, 'We did not take the King's commission for this sort of work, but to fight the King's enemies. The Irish, either of Ulster or the South, are not the King's enemies, yet our Wait-and-Sees will make them so. Therefore, "Wait and See!"'

Colonel Murray, no doubt, emphasized this view. He was there to fashion and keep his regiment fit; to nurse it so that when the time came it would follow him without hesitation. The Government cat, and the wall upon which it sat miauling, scarcely came into the game. Orders were orders, and Murray being an Englishman was concerned merely to see that men obeyed them. The Celt he understood as well as most men who have commanded them and seen them fight; but into the intricacies of their soul-torturing mentality he refused to delve.

As a matter of fact M'Grath, when he asked for leave that night after mess, was concerned less by the troubles caused by the political situation than by the notion which had climbed to headiness and was bred of Wassiter's name.

Who was Wassiter? An Israelite of some kind! He heard Dicky's voice appraising him. 'Man of middle height, square, hairy, dark — with eyes that have a trick of narrowing down to slits . . .' Again, 'Something in politics,' 'clever as they make 'em, too.' A cad obviously, in Dicky's view. And Effie wanted him in the House . . . the damned House that was attitudinizing and playing ducks and drakes with the Nation — *now* that cohesion was essential.

All the time he was chatting with his Chief, for Murray had a way of button-holing men he wanted 'for keeps,' as children say, M'Grath heard Dicky's snap-shot sentences sounding the death of hope. It could be no other issue — just death . . . if Wassiter was quite as *intime* in the Massenshaw *ménage* — he put it so wryly — as appeared. He saw quite clearly, even as the Old Man granted him leave — not a paltry week, be it noted, but a month, so please you — that when he got to Town there would be

trouble. He did not specify what trouble or whose trouble, simply trouble and left it there, like an entrée he did not care for, or a pipe he no longer would smoke.

Yet, in spite of all this, it was three days before he climbed the gangway in the dewy freshness of a September morning of incomparable beauty and came to the train which was to carry him to Town. Three months ago he had boarded a mail boat and gone punching into a sea towards Dublin. He saw it in retrospect as he sat waiting to start. A gloomy, rain-spattered day towards the end of June; rain in blobs, rain in full fig, spray leaping, and then when they were well settled into their stride green rollers which swept the forward deck and drove folk to their cabins. The worst passage he remembered in all his voyaging — like driving into the sou'west monsoon an hour or so after leaving Bombay once long ago — also in June. Then he was a sub; home on his first leave; careless, amazed at their attitudes as the old *Sutlej* punched her way towards Aden.

The memory seemed to ruffle him. He looked out of his window. Would they ever get away? What were they doing? He questioned a porter and got for answer as the man passed on — 'Heavy mail, sir — putting on an extra coach.'

He anathematized the heavy mail. What in the world made them choose this day of all in the week to burden the train with extra coaches? He sat back prepared for the worst and picked up one of the magazines he had purchased to beguile the tedium of his journey; but he did not read. He tossed it aside and settled down with a rug about his knees; slept, and when next he dropped the window, they were at Chester in the midst of a vast

bustle and twenty minutes late. But the breakfast basket he had ordered by wire at Holyhead came to assuage his impatience, to wake him and make life less unendurable. Finally, just as the train moved off he succeeded in getting a London paper — one which had remained unsold from last night. A *Globe*, pink, crisp, and folded for return.

He glanced at the headlines and tossed it aside to attack his breakfast — then, comforted and refreshed, lighted his pipe and sat back to read. A leader caught his eye. It dealt with the political situation in a way which brought despair again to his elbow. Ireland! Ireland! The whole seething pot of the distressful country again a-simmer. He could not face this issue. At the moment he wished to forget Ireland, to forget his place in it; his regiment — everything that spoke, however distantly, of it. He read the 'turnover,' a bright little *causerie* on the latest fashion in hats — women's hats be it noted — and found it stimulating.

After that it appeared nothing very much remained — a murder case, some talk about divorce — neither interested him. Then with his pipe nicely in full blast, no one in the carriage to heed him, or chat with him, or worry him, he sat up to re-read a paragraph which stung him and made him swear.

It said rather quietly, considering his frowning attitude, in a stop-press space, something about a horse winning by a long neck against the favourite, while the rest of the field were nowhere, then went on to announce that last night some of the Suffragettes had succeeded in getting into the House of Commons where, chained to the pillars — or was it railings — they sang and shouted challenges at the Government. There had been great disorder. The sitting had been suspended and the police had taken the culprits to the lock-up.

The question arose instantly to torture him: 'Who were the culprits?' But no names appeared. Apparently Government was refusing information on this head; refusing to advertise the success of these midges which stung and were caught in the act. Well — perhaps that was wise; but it added to M'Grath's disquiet. The report failed even to indicate whether the 'culprits' were leaders or of the rank and file. It said just as little as it was possible to say; but announced that 'they,' whoever they were, would come before Mr. Something Somebody in the morning. And here was day already, in being, papers issued, probably containing fuller accounts, and M'Grath unable to procure any!

At the moment this one fact struck him as the last word, the last impertinence. 'For' — the wheels, or the springs of the coach in which he travelled, drummed it out — 'For of course the cul-prits, the cul-prits are leaders . . . leaders.' This went on for so long that M'Grath flung the paper aside, opened the carriage door, and went down the corridor. He came presently upon a guard sitting beside his brake in the compartment he controlled and fingering his pipe. Beside him was a paper, beside that the blue-enamelled can which contained his tea.

M'Grath paused and said at a venture — 'That doesn't happen to be a London paper, I suppose?'

'Last night's *Standard*, sir,' said the guard.

'No morning's about yet, eh?'

'Not this side of Rugby, sir. Might get one there if they're not sold out.'

'Run on them, then?' M'Grath threw back, careless of mien.

'Yes, sir. Always is a run now the women's taken to

politics. Them Suffragettes are the fair limit. Got into Parliament last night and kicked up no end of a dido. Got up in the Gallery they say in my paper' — he picked it up and turned the page — 'chained onto it, rivetted, p'raps — any'ow that fast they had to send for Government locksmiths with files and crowbars to prise 'em out. Dido? Lord! sir, I'd 'a' given something to see that do. Good as the pictures — any day, and them yowlin' an' singin' out for the best part of an hour I don't doubt. It's there, sir, if you care to read it.' He handed the paper, pointing with a blunt finger to the paragraph.

M'Grath took it, tucked it beneath his arm, dug into a pocket, and produced his pouch. 'Try a fill of this,' he said. 'It's the right stuff — while I look.'

The guard took it, opened, and sniffed. He seemed to enjoy the blend and looked up twinkling — 'I will, sir, and thankee. I've not come acrost its like since I was on manœuvres two years ago, come next month. Down Aldershot way, we were,' he added, seeking confidence.

M'Grath looked up from his reading — 'Territorials?' he questioned.

'Terriers, sir. Just that. Army yourself, sir?'

He was busy filling the dudeen, as he called it, tucking it in sniffing, immensely contented.

'The Curragh,' M'Grath answered at once. 'Ever been quartered there?'

'No, sir — I have not. 'Eard about it, though, from them as has. A bit warm they called it.'

'Just now you may call it what you like — up to about boiling point.' He had scanned the paragraph and now returned it. 'Thanks for the look,' he said. 'Tobacco all right?'

The guard was solemnly lighting up. He glanced through a cloud of smoke and said — 'Eaven, sir. A taste, anyway, if I never get there.'

'Fill up,' said M'Grath. 'I have plenty in my kitbag.' Then, with a swift throw towards *sans-culottism*, he asked, 'Have you ever seen anything of this Suffragette business in Town?'

'I see 'em only yest'day, before I come away on the 5.50; a whole company of 'em, marching, flag flying, mounted p'leece escortin' 'em, all tidy as a row o' beans. On their way to the House o' Commons, they was, no doubt ...'

'Were you near? Did you happen to see any of them — their leaders, for instance?'

The guard, busy filling a round bottom screw-mouthed pouch, looked up and smiled. 'See 'em, sir? Lord, I'd 'a' bin blind if I didn't. Mrs. Massenshaw there, an' Lady Thing-a-me, an' Miss Massenshaw, an' Edith Clifford ...'

'All leaders, I suppose?' M'Grath interpolated.

'Just that,' the guard announced stolidly pocketing the pouch and returning M'Grath's. 'Leaders an' led. My wife among 'em — an' thankee, sir, for the smoke. It's It.'

'Good.' M'Grath accepted both, smiling over the blend. 'I seem to have struck oil,' said he.

'You're not in the know, sir?' The guard looked his concern — 'Not mixed up, as they say, in a thing like to that?'

'Why not?'

'Well, sir — bein' as you said you're in the Army, it never struck me to think that you might be so fixed as to be in ...'

'That's it, my man. Exactly what I was thinking myself. So fixed — eh? Well — are you?'

'I ham,' said the guard, the aspirate assertive.

'How?'

'My missis — she's in it. Hot.'

M'Grath's eyes twinkled. He went straight for his objective as he would have said — 'And what do you think of it?'

With a wry face the guard made no bones at all about it. 'I don't think, sir. I let them do the thinkin'. It's more peaceful like. An' a chap like me, as 'as the best part of a night on dooty, wants peace when 'ee gets alongside the missis in the morning . . . He's not up to scrappin'. Wants his sleep same as any other . . .'

'But it is the leaders who do the chain-gang business and get taken off to jail,' M'Grath put in, 'isn't it?'

'Generally speakin', yes — that's right. But sometimes it's others. Why, my missis wanted bailin' out 'bout ten days ago when I'm just back with the mail from Holyhead! An' I had to find the brass! Lucky we was good pals, or I might . . .' The guard withdrew his pipe and pointed with the stem, jabbed with it, and finally whistled. 'Yes, just that,' he added by way of explanation.

M'Grath laughed. The guard joined in. 'They 'av a way with 'em, sir,' he explained, 'as fair puts us in collar. Makin' a long stay in Town, sir? — if I may be so bold . . .'

M'Grath took out his card-case and handed one to the guard. 'If you are ever in a hole for that sort of thing again, send me word here and I will see what can be done about it,' said he. 'Yes, I'm up for a month, please God — and, you might send a boy my way at Rugby, with a paper, when we pull up.'

'I'll see to that, sir. Which will you want?'

'*Post* if you can. Any old thing if you can't . . . Three coaches up train, eh?'

'I'll see to it, sir — you can rely on that.'

M'Grath moved away to find his compartment. He passed on the way thither folk sitting in rows, nodding, uncomfortably asleep, others spread out in corners at their ease, others where a whole seat was at the disposal of one who slept honestly, his head pillowed on a bag. Boat-train travellers everyone and some not yet recovered from the effects of a singularly placid crossing.

But M'Grath did not sleep when he reached his compartment. Nor could he read. He had made up his mind that Effie was one of those who had been in the chain-gang as he termed it during last night's scene in the House, and that to-day in all likelihood she was paying for it. Damnable! . . .

There came pictures of the result to torture him. Effie in prison, starving to obtain her freedom. Doctors in attendance to watch her flagging strength and all the miserable details of forcible feeding, as from time to time they appeared in the press. Effie in that, glorying in it, provocative of arrest; ready to go all lengths to obtain that which no man of his acquaintance would cross the street to use.

Amazing!

CHAPTER VII

THE LONDON SCENE

THE morning when M'Grath reached Town was cool and fresh in the manner which London assumes with a nor'-west wind sedately crooning over the house-tops, as though forsooth it were perennially hers. For the previous two days it had rained in splashes. Umbrellas and mackintoshes had been essential if you were to keep dry. Now it was fine. The trees in Hyde Park green once more, the grass green, the streets clean swept.

For that reason and because he could not arrive at Mrs. Massenshaw's house until a decent interval had elapsed since lunch, M'Grath was walking up Piccadilly when anxiety bade him drive. He had been to his club, read the papers, chatted with men he knew, yet had gleaned little or nothing of what had happened at St. Stephen's. Further, when he rang up the Massenshaws he failed to get in touch with anyone to whom he could speak freely, so asked for an appointment. Now he was on his way to keep it.

Blue sky overhead, occasional clouds driving swiftly before the breeze, the trees, as he entered at Hyde Park Corner, shimmering and shedding leaves, Achilles still on duty making ready to smite whatever it was he saw, the kiosks busy; a few stray gallopers in the Row; endless tiers of chairs, most of them empty — everything in point of fact very much as he had left it three months ago. The grass was perhaps a little more ragged, the sheep when he crossed their track far up there on the Lancaster Gate path, more snugly blanketed against the winter. The

hum of the traffic the same, occasional horn blasts the same; nothing tottering anywhere but the Dumb Crambo show down there by Westminster Bridge — and that busily playing for a fall with a catch word held truculently for governance.

All in the clouds! A Nation at play; bread and shows the demand of one section; motoring, tennis, cricket — sports in brief — another; No-speed limit one of the most potent cries of the hour; votes for women the other. Effie one of the chain-gang on this side; the honour of a soldier on the other. How in God's name compass even an approximation to content — any approximation . . .

That alone was the change as seen by M'Grath, passing now by Peter Pan over there on Serpentine Border. All else in the clouds. Europe forgotten. Destiny forgotten. England's place in the scheme of things; Effie's future, his own, all in the clouds, and the clouds lowering — the Sentries not asleep but juggling; eternally and for ever juggling; juggling as though the stage on which they posed and shuffled were that of Mime and Fantasy.

M'Grath came on the minute of his appointment to the door of Number 9 and was admitted by a smiling maid wearing the Suffragette colours. 'No,' she was sorry to say Miss Massenshaw was not in. They expected her now at any moment; but Miss Sladen was at home and Mr. Harold on his way thither.

They crossed to the library and entered, the maid announcing M'Grath's name without having asked it. Well, even that sometimes happens.

Mary Sladen rose to receive him — 'So glad to see you again, Captain M'Grath. It is not always a coincidence is so opportune. When did you hear of it?'

'The scene in the House?' he asked.

'Of course,' she smiled over this, conscious of their divergent paths.

'It got itself fixed in my brain, if you will forgive my saying so, as the chain-gang. Hence my stupidity.'

'But why?'

'Bad light. Something in a stop-press notice about "chained" to pillars, I suppose.'

'Yes, they do rather rub us — if they have the chance. The chain-gang? Well, it's picturesque. We ought to be able to make use of it.' She took a note, and looked up smiling, alert, one of those 'Moderns' whom some of us have decided are advanced, possibly intransigent.

The idea took shape in M'Grath's brain as he accepted the brisk demeanour and full paraphernalia of Mary Sladen's office. He thought her too pretty for the harassing work in which she was engaged; too gentle for the type known as blue-stockings at that period in the Emancipation of Women; too bewildering — a sort of quick-change artist, perhaps — Yet he managed to chat sanely and to elicit answers which allayed his anxiety without, he hoped, giving the Show away.

The show figured in his mind as one of those secrets which only men in the early stages of life imagine are unpierceable. Yet Mary Sladen had no difficulty in reading it. In some undefined way she had learned his name.

It was not as Patrick M'Grath, or Captain M'Grath that she remembered him, but as Paddy, which was strange if you recollect this was the first time she had met him.

She was saying with bell-like clarity as he recognized her 'harassing' demeanour that Effie really *was* one of

the chain-gang at Saint Stephen's. That she was not in prison . . . 'in fact none of us are.' She spread her hands smiling. 'We are bailed out. Harold and one or two others are the guarantors. No end of a joke, Captain M'Grath. I fancy they don't suppose he is one of us. He's a man you see. Major Farningham says it's a pity he has nothing better to do — as though that were possible. You know Major Farningham, I think . . . In your regiment? I forgot. Of course he is. But,' she leaned back laughing, her hands interlocked round one knee as her foot — quite a pretty one — peeped from beneath her dress — 'you should have been here when he was in Town!'

'Why?' M'Grath asked, perhaps because she expected the question.

'He told dear Mrs. Massenshaw she was pushing us into the hands of our enemies . . . absolutely made her angry. Stumped up and down the room — here! if you believe me, and told her not to play the fool any longer . . . or be hanged if he wouldn't go and report what he knew to the War Office or somewhere equally inept and asleep . . .'

'Made him angry, eh?' M'Grath commented. 'Well — it can be done, but it takes a lot of doing, if you don't mind my saying so.' While in his brain there hummed a phrase which he resolutely banished from his lips — 'Good old Dicky!' it said, over and over again. 'Good old Dicky! Wish I had been here to help him!' Then with his natural manner he asked, 'But was Miss Massenshaw present at the time?'

Mary Sladen nodded, brimful of laughter.

'Rather. You should have seen her. She just rises to an occasion of that sort, you know . . . freezes. Abso-

lutely — “stony calm” I believe is the description generally used by our critics . . .’

‘Yes . . . I can understand that . . . and did she say anything?’

‘She told Major Farningham to go away and look after his soldiers and not to talk of things he did not understand.’

‘Poor old Dicky!’ M’Grath ventured. ‘Yes, that was rather a slap in the face — no wonder he was hipped when he got over to the Curragh.’

‘Was he?’

M’Grath said he thought so, and rose from his chair at the same moment to add rather tamely — ‘Thank you — I’m afraid I’ve rather kept you . . . had better be going . . .’

‘Oh, but surely you will see Effie — she will be in,’ she persuaded, glancing at her watch, ‘in a few minutes, I know.’

‘Better not chance it, Miss Sladen — er — she might turn on me, perhaps?’

She looked at him from half-closed eyes, laughter not far off — ‘Do you think that possible, Captain M’Grath?’

‘I scarcely understand why it should be impossible,’ said he.

‘Effie turn *you* down!’

‘Well — why not? Am I not a soldier also? Besides, when you think of it, how can I —’ He paused uncertain how far he had gone and her smile came to enlighten him.

‘A soldier, perhaps; but one of us surely? While Major Farningham is a cousin and scarcely sympathetic to our cause — as I understand him.’

He had the impression that she was twitting him, as he

listened. These women, he classed them so mentally, were out to whip men off the field; to make them mind the house, the children even, while they moved smiling to work in new spheres as Master.

Well, it might come to that in time, but at the moment he felt bound to temporize. He must get out of this corner into which he had been juggled. The help he gave them for instance must not go on. The 'one of us' touch nettled him; so, too, did the reflexion on the attitude of poor old Dicky Farningham. Still, it must be with Effie he broke a lance, not Mary Sladen, charming and brilliant as she appeared. Confound the woman! Why on earth did she laugh at him from the security of her swivel-chair? What was the game — their game? Cocksure! by Jove — surely . . .

And as he blurted apologetic inanities about an engagement which had no basis in fact, the door opened with a swing and Harold appeared on the threshold. He advanced smiling, holding forth his hand, thin, alert, brimming with the satisfaction which wrapped him as with a tailor's aura — 'Hallo! Caught you, you see. Glad to have the pleasure, by George! We've had no end of a time; giddy, hilarious! . . . seen Effie?'

'I imagined her in jail,' M'Grath returned, touching fingers because it seemed essential.

'Afraid you underrate our powers there. We don't go to jail — or if we do we know how to get out. Jail — bail . . . Sentence given — no food taken. That's our method. Works, too, by the Lord. Ever seen us stage a "Release"? No? Well, you must. Massacre of the Innocents isn't in it, as a draw — but old "One and Only" is getting wily. Says it makes martyrs of us and it doesn't pay . . . Going to cut it.'

“One and Only,” M’Grath repeated; ‘afraid I don’t know your jingle.’

‘Number one, sometimes — Prime Messer, you know — well, Minister; see?’

‘Thanks. Yes.’

‘Must get you in one of those. Spectacle, you know — like Tree’s stuff — pays no end. You’d love it.’

Again came the desire to hit out, to say something of that rather confused explanatory talk which he felt was necessary. And again M’Grath held his hand. He could not talk in the presence of Mary Sladen with the freedom he desired to this — this tailor’s model. Pah! He pushed it from him and looked from Mrs. Massenshaw’s son to Mrs. Massenshaw’s secretary, cool, smiling and at her best.

‘Afraid I’m rather out of my element, Miss Sladen,’ he said. ‘It sounds like comic opera — when . . .’ Again he paused, shaking his head, looking from one to the other; oppressed by what he saw.

‘Oh, it is!’ Miss Sladen coincided, her eyes alight. ‘A sort of *mélange* you know of Jack the Giant-Killer and Rudigore with Harold as the Chief Villain in *Sinn Fein* thrown in.’

‘Top-hole!’ Harold breathed. ‘You can’t beat our Mary at description any more than you can persuade us to believe in the German bogey some of our enemies are flourishing so busily. They don’t know how to stage a play, thank Heaven, or we should be left standing in a week — and they never will . . .’

‘German bogey?’ M’Grath began. ‘I wish to God that I could see that only, but, if my opinion is worth a rap to you, there is another, uglier, more damnable, nearer . . .’

He was away now, ready to flare, ready to lash out and

upon his words, breaking their sequence, came Effie, the door flung back on her entry, laughter in her eyes, a question on her lips — delicious to consider.

‘You here? I am so glad . . . but what is “more damnable, nearer”? Surely I’m not so bad as that, if I do take a hand at the windows.’

He could have told her in a brief rush of words exactly how precious he held her; but because of those others, he gave no hint of it, drew back indeed like one suddenly overwhelmed; took her hand, smiled as Mary Sladen said afterwards for the first time, and sought cover with — ‘You bring the sunlight to us, when I for one imagined you in darkest dungeons . . . I am glad to see you free. I came upon fear at Chester too early for peace, and it stayed with me till I reached Town . . .’

‘No — no!’ She lifted one hand, ‘What is it that is “more damnable, nearer,” if I am not the damnability?’

‘You? Impossible . . . still, if you insist . . .’

‘Making puns, Alteza!’ Harold dinned. ‘I flourished the German bogey and he outbogied me by bogey . . . shall I say smite?’ He looked at Mary, eyeglass fixed, a very coxcomb in attitude, then went on in a sing-song voice —

‘If you made a pun,
And they had a gun,
They’d can you away in Chicago;
But if you winced
They’d sell you minced
For tiffin on board the O-ta-go — see?’

His eyeglass dropped with a click and he ducked behind a chair to avoid the cushion Effie seized.

‘Take him away, Mary! Quick!’

He caught her by the arm as she came near and

marched with a commendable imitation of the goose step, singing to the door —

‘But if *I* made a pun
And *they* had no gun
Away in the wilds of Chicago;
They’d serve me on toast
And lay my blessed ghost
With pegs from the good ship, O-ta-go —’

He opened the door, bowed to the room, bowed to Mary as she passed through laughing, said, ‘*Exeunt omnes . . . proxime accessit!*’ with complete *sang-froid* and disappeared.

M’Grath advanced a trifle, and stood waiting —

‘Still playing the fool,’ said he. ‘No wonder Dicky was mad.’

‘Aren’t you rather hard on him?’ she pleaded. ‘Remember he is young and no end useful to us.’ Her hand pressed one moment on his arm as he drew a chair near.

Harold and his inanities or fooling, which you will, fell instantly to some other sphere, Dicky was forgotten; even the name of Alan Wassiter with which he came primed from Ireland, had it been spoken, would have fallen on unheeding ears. He saw Effie, heard her voice, and a moment had thrilled to her touch. He wondered if she knew the effect she produced, forgot the question and said —

‘Do you know what it means to see you once more?’

‘I know what it means — yes, naturally. How could it be otherwise?’

‘But to me — to me!’

‘I can guess, of course. You are no sphinx.’

Then deliberately changing the subject: ‘But you did see Dicky before you came away?’

‘Rather.’ He surrendered at the first blow. Unconditionally. ‘As a matter of fact he worked the oracle for me to get leave. He talked to the Chief, persuaded him, it seems, I was fed-up with all this jangle about Ulster and was thinking of sending in my papers.’

‘Splendid! Have you done so?’

‘No.’

‘But you will?’

‘If the Government intend to use us to coerce Ulster I shall — not otherwise.’

She looked up with a sigh, her face very beautiful under the influence of entreaty. ‘I wish you would,’ she urged. ‘It is useless expecting salvation of this Government. It will drift on and on, get tied in knots so that it can neither retreat nor advance, and then, before you can move, the order will come and you will obey. Don’t wait on events. Throw in your lot with us and give me your help. We want you with us — you know that. We want all the help you can give us . . . We are fighting for justice, Paddy, and your heart is with us. You have told me so a dozen times and I have counted on it. Come! Decide now. Give me your promise . . .’

‘No — no. I can’t do that. I gave my word to the Chief before I came away, and to Dicky, remember, that I would do nothing until some move made it absolutely certain that we should be sent North. Then there would be chaos at the Curragh with a vengeance. God knows what would happen exactly; but I do know there would be resignation *en masse*, desertion, fighting, and the dear old regiment would be torn to pieces. What else could happen? The half of us are Ulstermen, the other half southerners, Ballahooly boys aching to get square with the Orangemen and obey the priests . . .’

'So! And you will wait for that?'

'I must, Effie . . . I must!'

'Unhappily for my peace, I can see no *must*. But I can imagine my friend in the *mêlée*, going under wounded, perhaps killed in a fracas that would disgrace a mob. I hate to think of it; but it is there. The idea comes to me in the midst of my work, at night when I should be asleep, and I wake with a cry that should reach you whether you care or do not care . . .'

'Effie! For God's sake, don't try me. You know I care. You know I love you and would die to save you the smallest hurt; but you push love to the winds. For a chimera you refuse to consider it, refuse marriage — and throw me back upon myself in a fashion that would have driven me mad but that I hope still to break down the barrier you have raised against love and make you forget your singular hatred of marriage . . .'

'Love — hate!' She laughed a little bitterly with the words. 'Singular hatred of marriage! . . . Is it, then, so very singular, now that I have explained my mother's share in it?'

'Forgive me — I did not mean to wound. Love is love and hate is hate all the world over. Marriage without love is hateful if you will; but love without marriage is the echo of a foolishness which easily may end in sin. Give me time to win. Don't throw me back upon myself — for on my soul I cannot bear it. Come!'

She rose and took his hands, hands lifted in appeal, looked up at him smiling, lifted his fingers to her cheek, drew them near her lips and said with a complete assurance — 'If I had met you, Paddy, long ago, you might have won; but now it is too late.' Cold, measured were her words, cold like ice. 'I hate marriage; please let that

suffice. Now' — she held him with a glance, certain that she held him — 'Now I am going to be busy. Will you join us at dinner? Of course, if you have no engagement?'

'To-night?' Again he was her slave. 'Gladly — sure I'd come if I had a dozen . . .'

'Paddy!' She touched him wistfully. 'I wish you wouldn't build on impossible futures . . .'

'I won't. I build on one.'

'Very well. I suppose it is no use arguing . . . and in any case remember eight o'clock to-night is the hour . . . meanwhile, au revoir, dear friend, and remember I rely on you.'

He made his exit without encountering Harold, that ass of a chap, or coming in touch with Wassiter. He did not think of Wassiter. All his thoughts were of Effie who, even as he passed into the Gardens for a walk across the Park, sat in the library awaiting the advent of the Israelite.

CHAPTER VIII

ALAN WASSITER

M'GRATH scarcely imagined when he entered Mrs. Massenshaw's drawing-room that he would meet Alan Wassiter; yet life, if you consider it, has a way with it which sometimes appears ironic. It had on this occasion; for you see Effie was the link which coupled them and set them creakingly on their way. She did it so deftly, too, so naturally that M'Grath was even less astonished than might have been expected.

She was talking, one of a group of four, when he came in, and as he turned after making his bow to Mrs. Massenshaw he found her coming near and saying — 'I want to introduce you to one or two people before dinner. There is just time if you come at once.' He made some chaffing rejoinder as they approached the group; his eyes sorting them one from another. The man he did not know and his back told him nothing. He passed casually his face lighting as he greeted first Edith Clifford with a cheery phrase, then Dorothea Nesbit more lightly, stressing the fact that he had not seen her since that night at Albert Hall when he had scarcely seen her at all.

They shook hands smiling on the great event. 'Yes — wasn't it splendid! How perfectly wonderful dear Mrs. Massenshaw had been! And what a night London found for us. I shall never forget it in spite of Dad and my Admiral, who threatens to cut me off with a shilling if I take part in any more shows!'

'And you enjoyed them. I sympathize. Introduce me

to your Admiral and I'll see if I can persuade him to be kind.'

'Can't. He's too elusive, or busy, or something. He's a big-wig at the Admiralty — Sir Douglas Clancy . . .'

'Clancy? Oh! I know him. First Lord or something, isn't he?'

'Yes —'

'Then leave it to me. I may be able to modify the sentence, anyhow.'

He turned with Effie at this, saying — 'Clancy of all men! Of course I know him; he's one of us . . .'

and he found he was facing the third of this trio; a dark man with unpleasantly scrutinizing eyes, to whom Effie was saying — 'My friend, Captain M'Grath,' and to himself, 'Mr. Alan Wassiter.'

Instantly, even as he bowed, there sprang into M'Grath's mind the picture Dicky Farningham had drawn — 'square, hairy, dark — with eyes that have the trick of narrowing down to slits,' and he said to his *alter ego*, 'Jove! Dicky was right,' while facing his man and saying, 'I think you know a friend and brother officer of mine, Major Farningham?'

'Yes — I met him here. I admired the manner in which he argued his case with Mrs. Massenshaw.'

'Hum — yes. Dicky is nothing if he isn't straight,' M'Grath concurred, still oppressed by the mental picture his friend had provided.

'I agree. I think it essential, not only between man and man, but between nations.'

'But the diplomatists take other views,' M'Grath threw out.

'Call them politicians and I am with you,' Wassiter smiled.

'I'm afraid' — M'Grath twinkled with reminiscence here — 'the majority of us call him something sanguinary in the way of fools as the Bishop complained, and consider we have done our duty by the Nation.'

'When obviously we should be working with the shovel,' Effie laughed. 'Come — I hear dinner is served. The magic phrase for men and gods. Captain M'Grath, will you see Edith carefully to her place; Dorothea, Lieutenant Jimmy will be over to "tow you," as he calls it, when he has discovered the way.' She moved past M'Grath and contrived to whisper without too long a pause — 'This is a diplomatic affair. Be careful,' and reached Alan Wassiter's side where she halted looking towards her mother.

That lady, M'Grath discovered, was already moving towards the dining-room, on the arm of a bald-headed personage with no poll, obviously a German. Lady Harriet followed with another, 'von Schultz,' as Edith Clifford informed him; while Mary Sladen, Dorothea, Harold, and Jimmy Haines set to partners somewhere in the dim light beyond the piano. Incurable!

Edith Clifford was in a critical mood as M'Grath soon discovered. 'Harold,' she said, 'is permitted to escort Mary Sladen, but not to sit with her. He will take the head of the table — poor boy . . . and Jimmy Haines, who is to be at the other end, will have another opportunity to cut out his brother!'

'His brother — er — who with . . . afraid I'm a bit out of it,' M'Grath complained.

'Not at all. *In loco parentis* is more the phrase — big chance too. Remember that.'

'*In loco parentis*, eh? Whose?'

'All of us! Poor old Tompkins, you know, who has a

touch of gout or caution probably, was to have been my partner and he takes that view of his responsibilities.'

'I hope you are reconciled to the change,' M'Grath laughed as they entered what he had already dubbed the festive chamber.

'Oh, he's the last word,' said the lady, 'and change is always delightful.'

M'Grath's eyes gave him away as he sat and looking up caught Effie smiling opposite. Well, chance had given him something in any case upon which he could dwell with pleasure; it might give him an inkling, too, about that hairy one who sat beside Effie. For already it had dawned on his intelligence that if Mrs. Massenshaw were the hive-wrecker she was said to be, she had a daughter who very well knew how to extract honey from a rather dry comb. Effie between Wassiter on the one hand and Herr Teichmann, the German-Switzer millionaire, on the other, was rather like a filbert in the jaws of crackers — yet, *vis-à-vis* with himself! It was an omen at which M'Grath gasped. It discounted the hairy one's large agglutination of wisdom and youth. He turned to his companion who had been greeting Harold's arrival at the head of the table, and said —

'Afraid I am still in the dark about the brother, you remember, of our Vice, and the lady on his right — Dorothea you called her. Who is he and who the brother?'

'Jimmy Haines, the apostate's father, you know — I think you met him at Dorking — is the brother of Jag Haines. Jimmy is in the Navy, Jag in the Merchant Service, and the two were brought up with Dorothea — who is old Nesbit's ewe lamb.'

'Nesbit the astronomer — down at Dorking, too, isn't he?'

'Leith Hill. Shsh! Red rag . . . lady on your left.'

M'Grath turned warily and caught sight of the bull-necked German leaning over Mrs. Massenshaw as she settled in her place. He had come round for something, a word, perhaps, of the toasts which presently would be proposed. The glance was sufficient. Thereafter he saw mentally the gross fat of the man's dewlaps, which nearly disappeared when sitting erect, the rather purple features bending beside the clean-cut profile of the woman with silver hair and tongue who drew multitudes in her train.

'She doesn't look the part,' he said, turning back. 'Now if you had warned me' — he said it very *sotto voce* — 'of *him*, I could have reciprocated. Never mind. Tell me about the Apostates. They sound interesting.'

'Sorry,' she smiled in response, 'far too serious a moment. Ah! there it comes.'

He took his eyes from Mary Sladen and Dorothea, both seated beyond Mrs. Massenshaw, ostentatiously as it seemed, withdrawn from their partners and browsing *vis-à-vis* nothing in particular, to note the great German whose voice began to roll uncertainly amidst our consonants —

'My friend, Vassiter, is quite right when he tell you zat Vinance is the mainspring of Bolitics. Without Vinance no armies move, no ships are built, no Navy has guns. Without Vinance is no exchange of commodities, no food for your peoples, no watter to drink, no beer, no wine — no nussing at all, only starving men and women who look at their Boliticians and say w'y are zese sings so!' He pursed his lips over a plate which he had laden generously with *hors d'œuvre* a moment since; looked at a waitress bending beside him and said "'Ock,' with the spirit of a

man who intended to sample it and become engrossed in, the business of dinner.

Effie, less gustily a trenchman, smiled at Wassiter and said, 'Unfortunately that is so. It rules the world,' and seemed content to leave it there.

But Harold from his place at the head of the table threw that back — 'I thought,' he said, 'the hand that rocked the cradle ruled the world!'

'Foot surely,' M'Grath put in. 'All the pictures show her —'

'Hand is symbolic, I take it,' Wassiter decided.

'Hand or foot, it comes to the same thing,' Mrs. Massenshaw declaimed. 'Women alone wield it. And in the future, with the help of finance she will wield it to such purpose that a new world will arise so unlike the old that man will not know it as his.'

Teichmann bowed. He did not speak. He was exploring an avenue which perhaps led somewhere till Wassiter remarked rather acidly, M'Grath thought — 'There is a French proverb which says, "The tongue of a woman is a sword which she seldom suffers to rust"; but I think it would be much more apposite to say that in our view the revered lady whose guests we are, has lighted a fire in the length and breadth of England, which no man will be able to put out.'

'Hoch!' said the German. 'I lift my glass to zat. It is drue — effery vord.'

He drank. They all drank and some first clicked glasses. M'Grath found himself clicking with Mrs. Massenshaw, having already done so with his partner. Then a voice, guttural but correct, said from von Schultz's end of the table — 'It is revolution — I see it so,' and M'Grath's lips refused the wine.

In a moment came that trouble of his — loyalty; the loyalty of an Ulsterman to the throne; the memory of Mr. Vice with his glass held as just now he held it, saying, 'Gentlemen, the King.' That old sacred formula which meant so much to soldiers, to sailors, and all those who had sworn to uphold the throne, stirred then as it had rarely stirred before. He looked across at Effie. She smiled, meeting him, reading him, and a single phrase formed on her lips, unspoken, urged him to play the game . . . and his reply went back, 'How can I?' To which she answered, leaning towards him, her eyes very bright — 'What could not the lion do, if he was the monkey also?'

And before M'Grath, poor man, could frame his thoughts, Alan Wassiter challenged them both. 'What is it your poet says in answer to that?' Then, neither answering him, he went on —

"In love, if love be love and love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er have equal powers . . ."

'Apropos?' M'Grath threw back.

'Red herring, my friend — red herring.'

Effie leaned across the table, smiling. 'Refuse it and get back to our muttons — What could not the lion do, think you, in those circumstances?'

'It would depend surely on the training you had given the lion,' M'Grath said at once. 'He might be a loyal lion, with a nonconformist conscience, which would perhaps have acquired a complex against monkey tricks . . . or he might be an Androcles lion with a thorn in his paw, which a Royal Personage had removed — and if the monkey tricks involved damages to the personage he might quite healthily refuse . . . or he might be a stupid lion, or a

subtle lion' — his eyes had rested for a moment on Wassiter's as he paused looking for further metaphor — 'a lion which is neither an African nor an Asiatic; but a blend of the two; the last predominating, sleek, akin to the Bengal tiger...and there the monkey tricks would...'

'Stop! Stop!' Effie laughed to hide what possibly might be coming. 'You Irishmen are incorrigible. You may know nothing of the nonconformist conscience, nor of the psychology of lions; but you do know how to talk, doesn't he, Mr. Wassiter?'

Alan Wassiter had nothing to say against this but the obvious — 'Then why did you stop him?' And he said it ponderously.

'Because,' she purred, 'he seemed about to soar and I wished to keep him *ici-bas*, if I may say so.'

At the centre of the table a conversation interlarded with recondite words of high finance kept up a genial hum, through which Lady Delany's and Mrs. Massenshaw's voices skirmished with an occasional fire of words. Farther still, Jimmy Haines and Dorothea made play with talk of 'top-hole' matches, tennis and cricket, which each had seen or taken part in, but Mary Sladen definitely isolated was content to follow Mrs. Massenshaw, as a virile secretary should.

The room was beautifully furnished after the Chippendale period, the electric light softened by rosy shades which threw warm gleams on a table of exquisite mahogany, and the silver clustered about its centre. With its drawn blinds it seemed large enough to leave the table and those who sat beside it in an island of light, while all that lay beyond was in shadow, soft, warm, indicative of rest and dreams.

M'Grath glanced up and caught a breath of scented air coming from the gardens. He saw the curtains by which the windows were screened moving lazily in response to that air and thanked his stars he faced it. He was puzzled by all this finessing. It troubled him and bored him. Why could not these people say plainly what they required and have done with it? Who was this man Wassiter before whom they all seemed to bow . . . and what had he in common with Effie or with love?

The questions trailed indefinitely from a world he did not know. He sat among these folk because fortunately or unfortunately for him, his forebears had endowed him with an income 'too large for any one man's use,' and the Cause had need of him. But they were no dreamers. They were workers in various strange paths, intent on the organization of the Cause which held him bound; of that he was very certain.

Jimmy Haines, on the other hand was more concerned with Dorothea than with the fact that her father was one of the Apostates. Anyhow the old man, as he called his parent, rowed in the same boat and knew how to pull his weight on an oar. Von Schultz and Lady Delany were not dreamers, nor was their conversation entrancing. It touched on ways and means; Money as it is understood by those whom the City holds in thrall. Curious details of the Law of Nations, the Declaration of London, and other recondite subjects, quite uninteresting to a one-striper newly emerged from the egg — all these matters flickered about Jimmy's ears. He passed them by as he would have passed his Admiral, if Dorothea had called him to her. When champagne came round he took his glass, looked over the rim and nodded at Dorothea, just as he would have nodded if Jag had been beside him to aid or rag him.

The Declaration of London had no meaning for his ears; but presently it would come near to strangling the Service he loved and loathed in a breath. He knew that; Jag's, too, poor old Jag who was off somewhere ploughing the briny and preparing for his command. But in spite of that, he pricked up his ears when Schultz let fall a sentence which seemed to be promising for those who pay income tax. The guv'nor paid income tax, and other taxes as do all subjects of our Liege the King . . . but here was a chap who said if you invested your money in Germany, you need not pay it. Well, but how work the oracle? Jimmy leaned forward to ask, and got for answer — 'But you surely are not one who pay zat tax?'

'No — but the old man does . . . my father, I mean, and he rather bucks at paying it.'

'Your father? So — that is sad. It is no doubt due. Still —' he shrugged and looked at Lady Delany who said —

'We none of us quite like paying our income tax: but I do not think Lieutenant Haines's father would care to adopt your suggestion.'

'Then why object?'

'Our National Vice, Herr Schultz — we grumble and pay.'

'That, too, can be altered — when we have the vote,' said Schultz.

'How?' Jimmy asked point-blank.

'A question of finance, Herr Lieutenant. Difficult to explain.'

Jimmy gave it up and turned to Dorothea. He knew nothing of finance and did not wish — at all events in Dorothea's presence — to 'truckle with it' as he explained. Besides, the dinner was top-hole and someone

had filled his glass while he was talking to that Kaiserling. 'Curious,' Jimmy said as he leaned towards his partner, 'how these chaps keep their moustaches on end. Mine wouldn't, if I had one.'

'Sure?' asked Dorothea.

'Quite.'

'Then you'd have to buy a box of stuff and make it.'

'What sort of stuff?'

'Glue . . . but they call it cosmetique,' said the voice of Dorothea as she leaned near.

'My hat!'

'And you might use a little bit to keep your cap crooked — like that Admiral you are so keen on; or to splice your driver next time you smash it on the links . . .'

'I don't,' said Jimmy. 'It was you who smashed it.'

'Comes to the same thing,' cooed Dorothea. 'You'll have to mend it.'

This at the vice-chair end of the table; while at the other, held in check by the glum Harold, a more strenuous business unwound slowly to the eyes and ears of M'Grath. It came imperceptibly as the dinner progressed. It may have been the natural outcome of that whisper Effie had given as she passed M'Grath — 'This is a diplomatic affair — be careful'; on the other hand, it might have arisen out of sheer weariness of seeing so beautiful a girl sunning herself in the presence of that man Wassiter.

Once or twice she had called him by his Christian name; but the hairy one had not reciprocated. Usually, M'Grath remembered she made his heart leap with 'Paddy'; but now it was 'Captain M'Grath.' They seemed, all of them, rather fond of the familiar diminutive; but he had not heard it once to-night. An over-

sight, perhaps, even some part of the diplomacy asked for. He did not know.

But that scarcely accounted for glances which certainly spoke more loudly than words. He became restless under the influence of these microcosms: sometimes scarcely gathered the meaning of the small talk provided by Edith Clifford for his entertainment. Wassiter, Wassiter — it was always Wassiter, or Alan! Hateful! The memory jarred, and then, to fluster him and bring him to heel, as it were, her eyes fell pleadingly on his and he was her slave. The man with his broad, low forehead and sinister eyes vanished. His name on her lips, if it had sounded then, would have passed and the notion that she could permit love passages while still using her batteries on M'Grath vanished at birth.

Women are not like that, he told himself, striving all the time to pierce her soul. Effie isn't like that. She can touch one only; inspire one only . . . make a fool of one only — if you will — but not Wassiter . . .

Then as he turned less grumpily to make amends to his partner, he heard Effie's voice saying, softly, 'By the way, we are still in the dark about my mother's experience the other night — I wonder if *you* can explain it?'

She was looking at Wassiter, speaking almost casually, as M'Grath caught her words.

'Experience—your mother's?' Wassiter asked. 'Which? She has had many.'

'The night she went to meet Monsieur Vorovsky, you remember, and found your friend Herr Teichmann.'

Then for one second M'Grath saw the strange eyes narrow as Wassiter's met hers.

'Ah! that. The night she met me on my return from Paris . . . surely not "the other night," if I may question one so punctilious!' He smiled back.

'Forgive me! Yes. For the moment I was considering how it struck *us*. That curious drive to a place which appeared to have no name; the rather mysterious chauffeur who, nevertheless, was supremely competent in what we call "his job"; the no less mysterious *ménage* into which she was introduced by yourself, who most opportunely appeared when all the signals were set for danger . . . *Our* view, remember, as it appeared at the moment . . .' she smiled, a fork idle in one hand, the poise of her arm entrancing as she watched him.

'Ah! there you baffle me. I am not in the secrets, if secrets they be, of these people,' he shrugged out, French in action and attitude. 'If it pleases them to give no name to their country-house, surely that is unimportant if they make no difficulty in the matter of finance, which I understood was less strong than you desired.'

'Of course. I agree there. Still — why make a secret of things of this kind?'

'Pardon — why, may I ask, should they not be secret?'

'Perhaps because the English people don't like secrets . . . Harold, support me, there's a dear, kind brother, or I shall have to get you to change places with —'

'Support! Quotha,' Harold came back with a start and a quip. 'Who assails you, Alteza? I did but dream and the champagne is sweet — more sweet than my dream . . .'

'Your brother, Miss Massenshaw, is content that he can browse in comfort and refuses to search the bag for a possible carrot.'

'True! I do the donkey-work,' he admitted, 'and search for the carrot, eh?'

'Which another ass has stolen. Nevertheless' — Effie smiled, her glass held to the light — 'I think he would like to pick in one corner.'

'Perhaps I may be able to help him, perhaps no — I cannot say.'

'Right, *Alteza* . . . you touch me where I writhe. You strike the nail on its head. The point is this — the corner holds Vorovsky; what of Vorovsky — in short, is there a Vorovsky?'

Alan Wassiter made no to-do about this. He said swiftly and with a smile — 'Vorovsky, as I understand things, is Vorovsky, and no doubt lives at the mysterious house approached by the supremely competent chauffeur who nevertheless is, as I have discovered, something of an eneeigma.'

M'Grath's eyes sought Effie's as the strange word fell, scarcely French, not English, and saw she had caught it; tested it and found it excusable. Had not the man lived in France, was he not bilingual, perhaps trilingual; and if he were not, did it matter while Effie remained kind? Then, as the thought passed he caught Wassiter's clear articulation as he said in a silence which seemed to have invaded the whole room; and through which the slight stir of the servants, engaged in sweeping the table of all useless garniture, struck sharply on the ear. Yet they only placed finger-bowls on exquisite lace *d'oyles*, fruit, and the slim cut-glass which is essential to the passing of port.

'For all that, I recognize how it must appear to you.' He paused on the sentence which sounded like a slap in the face, given with a velvet glove if you please, then went on, 'And I think if you were to ask my friend, Herr Teichmann, he no doubt can satisfy you on a subject to which I confess I am myself indifferent.'

'Of course!' Thus the genial *vis-à-vis* of Mrs. Massenshaw, his shoulders lifted, lips pursed, the very antithesis of Gallic grace. 'Vorovsky is my very good vriend; but

alas! seldom joust near enough to broduce out of my hat — as you seem to desire. But the house of which you speak is mine — I prefer, you understand, zometimes ze opportunity of quiet. And I go there w'en I can. Vorovsky also — w'en ee is in England. Shall we not leave it so?' He reached his glass as a waitress bent down to ask — 'Do you take port, sir?' brought it nearer and replied, 'Certainly — when I know, as I do here' — he bowed to his hostess — 'the vintage is superb!'

The two maids went the rounds filling glasses, set the decanters and left the room.

In spite of the compliments Mrs. Massenshaw seemed disturbed. The sudden discussion of Vorovsky, a discussion which she supposed Effie would have been wise enough to suppress, annoyed her and she turned rather tartly to her guest saying — 'I quake sometimes for my young people, especially when I remember some of them are on bail.'

'Ze port,' he lifted his glass to the light, 'will cure zat. *Allons!* I drink and forget they are on bail.' He climbed slowly to his feet. 'I drink to the lady of the silver tongue whose force astonishes a world zat is old and tired; to the splendid day zat will come when ze Cause for which she has fought and suffered is at length won. I raise my glass remembering how great those sufferings have been. How colossal the burden she has borne during these years of infinite length. And I beg you in spite of very just agitation I observed at the singular audacity of a house which remains unnamed and the perversity of a friend who remains *rare*, that you will accept ziss too small testimony of my very true respect for your great leader. I give you, ladies and gentlemen, Mrs. Massenshaw, and I ask you to drink wiz me, her very good health. Hoch! Hoch!'

He sat, but rose again as a ringing cheer greeted Mrs. Massenshaw from guests who all were standing. 'Good!' he said frowningly, master of himself amidst the hum, 'zat ghost is laid!' and again vigorously 'Hoch-ed' . . .

But it was not laid. In spite of his obvious joy at laying it or perhaps because of that joy, M'Grath caught the phrase which announced its banishment; Lady Delany caught it, though Mrs. Massenshaw, sitting tense and rather white, failed or did not choose to catch it. You could never tell exactly what reached the ears of that Great Leader in the woman's battle for freedom. She could sift and refuse words as they fell, her face displayed no sign, her eyes said nothing. She was sphinx-like, always ready, with a quip if necessary, to throw those who thought they read her, back into the ditch whence they had sprung.

When the cheers died and her guests were again in their chairs, she rose and began to speak — saying at first — 'Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!' then quietly: 'If it be greatness to receive the whole-hearted confidence of one's friends; if it be greatness to win the hatred of that section of mankind which pays me the compliment of hatred . . . if it be greatness to have discovered how easy it is to overthrow man — if you pluck the chair from under him while he is asleep; how readily the world will acclaim you if you challenge his stupidity; point out to those who are waiting to laugh at him, what an ass he is and how stupidly he performs his duties — then indeed am I great, heroic, wonderful . . .

'But I am none of these things. I am just a woman, tired often, ready for the comforts of my station; anxious to read thoughtful books, to hear beautiful music, to go to the play; but because also the good God ordained I should

have brains to use and eyes to see the oppression which weighs on us who are women, I may have none of these pleasures, these splendid relaxations of modern life which appeal to me, but perforce must go hungry and tired to my bed . . .

‘Some of you know what Ibsen says in his notes for modern tragedy — “there are two kinds of spiritual law” — you remember? “two kinds of conscience,” one in man, and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man’s law, as though she were not a woman, but a man. The wife in the play — he was speaking of *A Doll’s House* — ends by having no conception of what is right or wrong; natural feeling on the one hand and belief in authority on the other have altogether bewildered her . . .

“A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is exclusively a masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view. In this case she has committed forgery and she is proud of it, for she has done it to save her husband’s life, because simply and solely she loves him. But her husband, with his commonplace principles of honour, is on the side of the law and regards the matter with masculine eyes. And so, like certain of the insects, who go away and die when they have done their duty in the propagation of the race, a mother in modern society stands alone when she has offended man’s law and must face her inevitable destiny with what courage she has left” . . .

‘My brains I may not use. That is the outcome. I am a woman. The education my father gave me I may not use. I am a woman. I may see what is wrong, note what

is astray in this, that, or the other office of Government; but I may not take my stand in debate and show where these men fail, why they are astray, the kind of fool who sits in the office whence laws emerge. I may know the difference between two candidates for parliamentary election; I may know that one is a fool and the other, one of those who sweat mankind; but I may not cast my vote for the fool so that mankind may at least be saved one more sweater — because foresooth, I am a woman . . .

‘Logical, is it not? Futile, is it not? Because I am a woman . . . and would learn . . .’

She stood a moment silent, the room with its deep shadows seemed darker by contrast with the rosy tint which lay upon her and all those who surrounded her, lighting the grey satin she wore and making it glow. The windows were unshuttered and one of them open to the soft air. Beyond was a balcony jasmine clad, fragrant, while the heavy curtains that screened them from the night waved at intervals admitting the scented air.

The trees which bordered the Gardens were still as the room that held Mrs. Massenshaw’s guests, still as the tall hollyhocks beside the shrubbery on the left. The Gardens were closed, keepers no longer on duty — quietness everywhere as the leader surveyed her guests.

‘There was a little breath of petulance just now. It escaped me until suddenly a name was mentioned thrice by my son. Then I gathered what had occurred. I mention it simply to point out that I think it due to Herr Teichmann to say that I know Monsieur Vorovsky and accept Monsieur Vorovsky’s word that “he has not been in England since I returned from the East,” and in consequence was unable to meet me on that night when I en-

joyed a most excellent dinner in a house known to the countryfolk as "Brambles."

'I think there is no secret about that?' She looked at Teichmann, who said, 'Bravo! None at all.' 'Nor is there any secret about Monsieur Vorovsky, who, I assure you, will . . .'

The curtain opposite Mrs. Massenshaw seemed to suffer under a blast of wind; but none stirred, and as the motion caught her eye she paused and was about to call a servant to close the window when one of the waitresses stepped down and began to cross towards Wassiter.

'Close that window,' said Mrs. Massenshaw, 'and come to my room after dinner to explain how you happen to be here.'

The woman turned and did as she was ordered, then crossed the floor quietly moving to the door. She seemed abashed, perhaps confused at being caught. All eyes were upon her. Wassiter twisted with the others, an amused twinkle in his glance. Then suddenly M'Grath leapt to his feet shouting, 'Down! Quick!'

There was a blinding flash and Wassiter rolled from his chair. He lurched as he fell and lay quite still.

For one amazing moment no one stirred, no voice was heard, only the woman moved and M'Grath. Then again there was a swift turn, the woman pointing a revolver, M'Grath leaping after her, M'Grath striking straight from the shoulder, the woman collapsing, the revolver slipping from her grasp. In a confused jumble Harold and Jimmy Haines with von Schultz reached the window, picked up the woman, the revolver, pinioned the one and turned to see what other thing had transpired.

Nothing very serious apparently. Wassiter sitting up again, someone dabbling his forehead, Effie bending over

him, calling for a knife, her hand gripping his left arm high up where bloodstains showed.

Then Wassiter, though obviously in great pain, smiled and said in her ear —

‘How like life! The cup at one’s . . . ah! lips . . . then . . . Yes cut by all means . . . It is nussing — one of the Madre’s e-wee lambs!’

Then he fainted.

M’Grath reached his side as the last sentence fell, and in spite of the tension he said to Effie — ‘E-wee — remember that! What the devil is the meaning of it all?’

He alluded to the attempt, not to the strange word, and Effie, her lips close to his ear whispered —

‘Never mind that now. Help me to get these things off. I will hold him. I am afraid the artery is touched.’

BOOK III
IKON-SMASHERS
1913

BOOK III

IKON-SMASHERS

1913

CHAPTER I

RIDING THE STORM

ALAN WASSITER was never in any great danger after the first twenty-four hours had elapsed. Before twelve had elapsed, it may be termed touch-and-go, a ding-ding race between expert surgeons on the one hand and the powers of light and darkness on the other — yet Wassiter never lost grip of essentials.

Some men are like that. They may be beaten physically, but mentally their forces are unimpaired. They keep their hold on events, do not forget, and after the first stress of the shock continue to direct operations, if one may so term them, which are necessary for their safety.

Wassiter made light at once of the attempt of which he was a victim. When he learned that the maid who had fired was not one of the servants at Mrs. Massenshaw's, but a man in disguise, he permitted no surprise to escape him. Indeed, he smiled. He had enemies, he announced while his friends strove to dovetail evidence, 'All who aim at the regeneration of mankind are liable to these things.' What would you have? The forces which hold the reins and would keep the *status quo*, are as ruthless as those which would upset them. A bagatelle! The game of life

— not worth powder and shot, much less the legal armoury, detectives, and the rest . . . He pooh-poohed it all. Some mistake had occurred. No doubt it was unfortunate he happened to be the victim, unfortunate, too, for the dear friend in whose house it had taken place.

He reminded Effie of their conversation on the terrace at Low Willows, laughing at the decision he had made not to enter Parliament and pointing out that had he taken her advice he might have escaped. And when she pressed him to reconsider that decision he shook his head sadly — ‘No, no! I do not court a certainty in order to avoid the uncertain aim of one who obviously did not understand the mechanism of an automatic. Let it go at that. I am very much alive and ready to incur the hatred of those who are scheming against us.’

It sounded heroic; but the decision was given so gently, with so bored an expression that it seemed he added — ‘Let me alone. I am a match for the *canaille* as you will see.’

Braggadocio? Not at all. Yet no hint escaped him which could lead Mrs. Massenshaw, Effie or M’Grath to suppose any sinister reason lurked in his mind. He wrote letters with his left hand quite as well as with his right. He was ambidextrous as well as bilingual, and chuckled, leaning back upon the pillows, a tablet on the narrow table which crossed his knees. ‘They will have to use more than one bullet,’ he gave off, ‘if they wish to keep me from the pen.’

Mrs. Massenshaw, and Effie to a less extent, acquiesced in this. They had no desire to bring wasps into the hive. Authority was sufficiently alert in pestering them always. The escape of a malefactor seemed of smaller importance than his capture at a time when their organization was

planning further onslaughts on the public. Neither of them were enamoured of the publicity which a magisterial inquiry would set going. The Cause would suffer. It would give their enemies pleasure to comment on the evidence, if it came to that, which the unfriendly papers would certainly find interesting.

Wassiter argued in this sense — and after all, he was the individual most concerned. He was full of admiration for the new programme which was afoot, and looked to the day when he would again be able to assist.

Meanwhile, the anarchist, who had been safely housed in the teeming district north of Bayswater Road, escaped. How, when, or where no one seemed to guess. Wassiter said he was not concerned in the matter. Sufficient that he had taken himself off their hands. But M'Grath, whose leave had run now for a fortnight, expressed the opinion, when talking it over with Effie, that Wassiter was less ignorant than they supposed. That instantly brought him face to face with Effie —

'Why?' she asked, briskly handling the cudgels.

'Afraid I can't help you there,' he answered.

'Then why insinuate?'

'I do not. I give my opinion. I can't say why I hold it, yet I do.'

'Well — but surely you must have some grounds.'

'None in the world, dear girl. Just insight, imagination — what you will.'

'You don't like Alan Wassiter,' she objected at once. 'At least tell me what has he done to offend?'

'If I were to tell you that, Effie, I should be compelled to touch matters which you have decided are to remain undiscussed,' he said quietly, but with eyes alight, his hands extended for her to take or leave as seemed best in her eyes.

She made no attempt to draw him, said simply — ‘Then I accept your opinion, Paddy — and will ask no questions.’

She sighed and seemed about to turn away when suddenly he intervened —

‘Tell me what this man is to you,’ he begged. ‘Set my mind at rest, for I am beginning to despair.’

‘Despair? Of Alan Wassiter or of me?’

He refused this and pressed home — ‘What is this man to you? You nurse him when he is quite able to afford the necessary aid. You talk with him, joke and laugh with him, and are interested in that attitude of his which is hateful to me . . .’

‘What attitude?’

‘Cynicism . . . come, tell me.’

She held him off, her face alight — ‘Yes, you are right about the cynicism; but you forget we are engaged in the same battle. Alan Wassiter has known me since I was a tiny tot. He has been our friend for more years than I can remember — and surely it is only common humanity to nurse him when he was struck down in my mother’s house. If you weren’t Paddy and my kind, kind friend, I should be inclined to resent what you have said. As it is I ask you to have no fear for me. Alan Wassiter is Alan Wassiter; a very necessary helper at this time . . . but he is just Alan Wassiter — nothing nearer or finer. We nurse him because it would be inevitable, if we had others to do so, that talk must arise. How could you stifle it? Here is a man suffering from a gunshot wound in our house. How did he come by it? What would the maid who had been “walking out,” as the phrase goes, with this anarchist, say to explain her story? It would be passed in review by the kitchen and eventually come into the hands

of the police. We can't allow that risk . . . Still — don't be alarmed on my account. Effie Massenshaw will remain Effie Massenshaw in spite of Alan Wassiter . . . perhaps because of him. Let that suffice.'

When a man is so deeply enamoured of a woman as was the case with M'Grath, he very easily accepts arguments which in other situations he would find fallacious or even alarming. The explanation was unworthy, a sinister suggestion lay within its compass. M'Grath did not see it. It appealed to his heart, not to his head, yet he took it just as it was offered, without criticism or mistrust — for Effie had shown her preference. Nothing else mattered. Even the law has been known to smile upon a beautiful litigant — and here was a soldier whose surname was M'Grath, and a woman who, having recently escaped the rigours of prison, was well equipped in the use of phrases which may mean nothing.

The age abounded in compromise, makeshifts, arguments — all the paraphernalia of a harassed Authority threatened by folk whom it dared not punish. Effie and her friends had escaped the penalty which they had justly earned after their last escapade and the papers rang with indignation. They called it a travesty of justice and foretold just what would happen as a result of this leniency. But the solid background of opinion was strongly in favour of leniency. Women who were prepared to go to prison, who openly courted arrest, in order that they might starve themselves to freedom; who were permitted to organize great processions shepherded by the police to escort 'martyrs' to their homes on their release were women on whom the Nation, patient as ever, was ready to lavish sympathy and encouragement.

Were they not fighting in the only possible way for the regeneration of the masses? Were not justice and common-sense alike on their side? What had Government done hitherto that the Nation should stand by it; had it not quibbled and striven by any and all means to persuade women it agreed with them? Contemporaneously had it not gone out of its way to make it impossible for women to obtain justice?

In all truth the Nation was tired of the whole stupid business; tired of Government, tired of masquerading politicians who quibbled with words which meant nothing; tired and ripe for any kind of change which might appear out of the welter. It desired to get back to its work and its games unharassed by argument; unharassed too by the unending processions, appeals and all the concomitants of a turmoil which could only be equalled by the fighters at Donnybrook Fair.

The Nation was amazed at the attitude of its law-givers. It had lost faith in them. The talk which had been expended at Limehouse and elsewhere had gone far to produce this attitude. Everything seemed in flux, nothing stable; the House itself sitting still at the bidding of a leader who ordained that it should 'wait and see.' It was a Nation which had been safe so long and had grown so rich that it had forgotten the sailors who made it rich; it had forgotten, too, the little army of redcoats, khaki-clad when they went to their death, without whom it would cease to exist. It had forgotten all the essentials of nationhood and waggled tongues over non-essentials, accepting quip and badinage for argument; a catch-word in place of truth. And now it was amazed that it was stirred; angry that it could not continue to play games, motor the country through, visit and do as heretofore because of

this new excitement which had come upon the Garden that was England.

It forgot in the ruthlessness of this stirring the reasons which produced it. It preferred to listen rather to its soothsayers and its charlatans than to its 'prophets' and its 'scaremongers.' It preferred the thing it desired to prefer, which is the law as written of all democracies. It argued that it elected men to do its work and refused to interfere when obviously the work they did was other than that they had sent them to do. It argued that these men had been chosen because they were the best men to represent their views; ignoring altogether the working of the Party Machine which ordained that he who was chosen must take the oath of allegiance first, and think afterwards — for of such is the Kingdom of Men.

And while Government improvised schemes to meet the situation and to evade the responsibility of keeping women in English prisons where they might die and become martyrs; 'Prussia's Darling,' as der Kron Prinz was termed, was propounding a new order for the exacerbation of the French in a townlet of Alsace-Lorraine, Zabern. Here, amidst a flourish of words and swords, he condemned to death by the holy Law of Militarism, with the correct ritual you may be sure, all those stupids of civilian life who refused, or forgot to salute officers whom they met on the pavement.

One stupid, a cobbler be it said, refused to salute and got so entangled amidst the swords that he died of them. That is precisely what a stupid might be expected to do. He had lived to that end and would die of it.

And having honestly died of it, instantly again a whirl of words written and spoken as at Algeciras, and at

Agadir in the forgotten years of the eternal problem which had been buried and honoured by those who had officiated as mutes of a singular loquacity.

It happened quite tragically for Mrs. Massenshaw's Cause. At one time it seemed likely to extinguish her and her Cause; then came a pause which seemed to indicate pressure from the still heart of Germany; the voice of Maximilian Harden and others questioning the attitude of those who heroized Prussia's Darling, setting him in his place — wherever that was — and perhaps raising a fund to produce forgetfulness on the part of those who were kin to the cobbler.

'A move for peace my friend. A move for peace. I am happy to tell you it will prevail . . .'

Thus Joseph Bland-Tompkins, M.P. for Great Blundelham, and Lord of the Manor of Stone Court, in the centre of that Garden which was England.

Mrs. Massenshaw's eyes took him in. He was stocky, as the phrase goes, dark, with Jewish features, close-cropped beard, and a pink-and-white complexion which spoke of Wales and was almost womanish in colouring. His friends said he had attained the dignity of millionairedom by the use of methods which had brought less clever financiers to the block — which now is written as Wormwood Scrubs. Impossible to conceive! Watching him as he faced Mrs. Massenshaw — rolling fat periods — impossible!

'I am happy to remember your forecast was for peace,' she said suavely.

The Member for Great Blundelham bowed — 'Peace,' he said, 'is essential to the City. It is essential also in Berlin. Then rest assured your Cause will not suffer. Remember always that war and finance are incompatible.

War wastes money, finance places it at the disposal of those who make it grow.'

'Generally speaking,' Mrs. Massenshaw interpolated, 'of course one sees that is so . . . but I am so unfortunate as to have relations who are in the Army; and they tell me it is only postponed. I take no heed,' she shrugged it out. 'I have planned what is to occur and it will occur, war or no war . . .'

'Phit!' Mr. Tompkins snapped fingers. 'That for the Army's opinion. It is we who call the tune when war comes, and now we do not call it. If we called it, the slump in securities would be colossal and America would seize her chance and move towards domination. Therefore there will be no war. Put it from your mind!' He spluttered sentences with machine-gun precision, 'The financiers have spoken . . . *le roi le veut!*'

'I am content if only it be postponed until we have won,' Mrs. Massenshaw agreed.

'War! War! I go further,' he ejected, sitting quite still, the very personification of Pacifism despite his electric phrases. 'If war comes, it will end in stalemate. No one will win. We cannot afford to cripple the energy of any nation. Much less the energy of one known as an export nation. England lives on her imports. It must continue to live. The financiers of the world will see to that . . . Country? Nationality? Finance takes no heed of either. It asks for stability, not insolvency. Depend upon it, it is finance that rules the world. It must be so — otherwise we should have a collapse and all starve together . . . which is imbecility . . .'

Other friends arrived at that chat on ways and means which Mrs. Massenshaw had arranged; Lady Delany tall,

suave, and exquisitely gowned; Haines, who still hoped against hope that saner counsels would prevail, came armed with quotations from Dostoievsky's prophecy and the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion.'

He entered at a moment when the door had closed on the financier, and Lady Delany was saying —

'I see a great change in Effie. What has happened?'

'I know of nothing, but I admit she seems less interested in her work than was the case formerly,' Mrs. Massenshaw replied; then advanced to meet the Rector. 'I am so glad to see you,' she said earnestly. 'I feared you, too, were among those who have changed. My house crumbles if I find my old friends, Iphigenia apparently aiding them, no longer able to keep pace with me . . .'

'No one regrets it more than I do, believe me,' he said as he drew a chair near and sat down. 'But if you make the pace a race, how can you expect a scratch crew to keep up?'

'If I have been compelled to accelerate matters, believe me I have very good reasons for doing so.'

'Reasons which we who are with you may not share?' Haines questioned point-blank.

• 'I am afraid so.'

'I demurred to that, you remember,' Lady Delany interpolated, 'when the new programme was first discussed. What has occurred since you returned from India to compel the change?'

'The knowledge, my friends, that Government is playing with us and that nothing but the measures I have planned will bring it to book.'

'Fire, water, chemicals, electricity — hammers and torches — war in point of fact on the Nation which is

innocent in order to bring Government to its senses?' Haines questioned. 'I can have no part in it.'

'The end justifies the means, my friend,' Mrs. Massenshaw protested, her beautiful features alight with the old satiric phrase.

'No, no, no! I cannot believe you have weighed that,' Haines breathed, stirred beyond his wont.

'I have.'

'A primitive doctrine, if I may say so, but potent if unchecked,' Lady Delany objected. 'Do you imagine that people will stand it, or Government refuse to intervene?'

'Government is dead. There is no Government!' Mrs. Massenshaw's voice rang with the words, her eyes took a new light and the rector saw it.

'I can understand your attitude up to a certain point,' he said, 'but beyond that, when you decide on using forces which mean chaos if you are permitted to continue, then I demur . . . I must demur. More — if you will allow me I will give my reasons.'

Mrs. Massenshaw bowed, the light still there.

'You have heard, no doubt,' he resumed, 'of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"?'

'Yes.'

'And have considered them?'

'I consider them beside the question, absolutely and definitely.'

'You recognize that your new friends are hand and glove with the revolutionary forces which are stirring the world?'

'On the contrary, I refuse to credit it. I have talked with my new friends' — she emphasized this — 'and have assured myself that what they say is true.'

'And I, on the other hand,' said Haines, 'am convinced

they are false. Here is a specimen of the teaching which even now is going on in England. It is from one of their papers on the subject — "A teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle — is on our side. The lawyer who defends an educated murderer because he is more cultured than his victims and could not help murdering them — is one of us. The prosecutor who trembles at a trial for fear he should not seem advanced enough — is ours, ours . . ."

'And to instruct the agents who are among us to-day,' he continued his reading, 'you are "to reduce the villages to confusion, to spread cynicism and scandals, together with a complete disbelief in everything and an eagerness for something better, and finally, by means of fires to reduce the country to desperation . . ." Subtle, is it not, stupid — just missing the mark as a means of firing a people like the English. Still it is part of a definite programme to produce revolution, and these new friends of your Cause are allied with the men who . . .'

'I deny that.'

'But do they?'

'Definitely.'

'And you believe them?'

'Absolutely.'

'I accept your word, Mrs. Massenshaw; I have no hesitation in doing so, for we are friends of lang syne . . . but, I cannot accept your judgment. I think these people are playing with your Cause as certainly as you believe Government is playing with it.'

'Of what people do you speak? I wish to be definite,' she said swiftly.

'Of the Junta of Red Gables.'

'I know of no Junta.'

'All foreigners — every man of them,' the rector emphasized. 'I call them a Junta. You went there. You know the place. Where is it?'

Mrs. Massenshaw's fingers played a tattoo on the arm of her chair. 'I am afraid I cannot help you there.'

'You went down by car — a long distance, at night?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'Their car?'

'Yes.'

'And met Alan Wassiter there, when you supposed him in Paris?'

'Quite true — but I am unaware how the fact came to your knowledge.'

'That, with your permission, I wish to leave.'

She bowed and he resumed, Lady Delany leaning back in her chair, content to let the matter blossom. After all, was it not her own view?

'There is something I don't understand in all this,' he said, 'something sinister, un-English. I do not pretend to understand what is behind it all. I only see the results and remember that you have placed yourself in their power ...'

'No!'

Mrs. Massenshaw's voice rang abruptly on that challenge.

'I repeat,' she said more evenly, 'that I am content to act on the assumption that they are what they say they are ...'

'But you refuse to permit us to share your knowledge?'

'Absolutely. I passed my word. I never yet broke a promise. If I am to lead, I must lead in my own way ...'

'And that,' the rector took up sadly, 'means the part-

ing of the ways. I am sorry. I hoped to persuade you — nevertheless, permit me to give you my views. I hate argument, but I feel so strongly that if you persist in carrying out your new methods you will be doing a disservice to the Cause we all have at heart . . . bear with me a few minutes and I will try to show you why I think as I do . . .

‘Women are injured by man-made laws; there are enactments which differentiate against them, and in order that we may remove these anomalies we have sought to give women a vote on the same basis as a man’s. This the Government refuse and as it seems we have come to a deadlock you suggest, and your new friends back the idea, that we shall arm ourselves with hammers, torches, and the like and stalk through the land smashing the windows of unoffending citizens, maul policemen, burn churches, pour chemicals into the letter-boxes — in other words harness the forces of *sans-culottism*, create uproar and play into the hands of these folk who are in our midst advising youths to burn the villages . . .

‘You are to show the mob that it is as easy to smash Governments as it is to smash windows. That it is as easy to pull down the Prime Minister as it is to cock snooks at the whole, centuries old, built-up edifice known as the British Constitution . . . how to begin that revolution which observers have said can never be attained in England; how to perpetuate the whole costly, brain-racking business of class-war in order that women may shirk their duty at the polls *pari passu* with the men who were their brothers . . .

‘Well — if votes be essential to carry on the government of this country, and that is the only way now left to us to attain the vote, I say the vote must go. That is my

decision, and I must warn you that you will alienate an enormous number of people who are your friends, who wish you well — further, that you will rouse thousands of others who at present are lukewarm, and quite ready to side with you. Will you risk that also?’

For a moment there was a short pause, then Mrs. Massenshaw smiled — ‘Yes. I am prepared to risk that also. I have undertaken to risk all. When the Government sees that at length we are in earnest, it will concede our demands. Make no mistake about that, my friend. I laugh at your fears — not because I would insult you — but because I know my ground and have none . . . The matter is too big to be thrashed out in talk. We must act. I must win this game, and I see only one way to win it now. Money is essential. My friends provide it . . . the scoffers are at work. You do not scoff. Few of those who speak and think as you do, scoff. You are a man of peace — I bow to you there. You see dangers where I see safety. You see ruin where I see triumph,’ she spoke quickly, like one inspired. ‘I do not know why this is so . . . temperamental, perhaps. But your Junta enables me to press forward and I move at once to win the Cause for which I have fought and for which, if necessary, I will die . . .’

She rose from her chair and held out her hand — ‘I am more sorry than I can say. I suppose this is the end?’

He took her hand gravely and bent over it —

‘Indeed, yes. I, too, regret it more than I can say. I could not go on, nor’ — he shrugged it out — ‘with my views could I allow my daughter to continue her friendship with Effie. I do not think you understand whither you are moving — the whole notion is repulsive . . . terrible.’

'I think,' said Mrs. Massenshaw, 'that you are prejudiced by what you have heard.'

'On the contrary,' he smiled, following her lead, 'it is what I have not heard that troubles me. And Lady Delany, what do you decide?'

'I share your opinion as to the danger; but I have given my promise and must stand by it.'

'Then it is good-bye?'

'Unless you will consider the matter afresh — I am afraid so.'

The rector made no pause here — he held out his hands, one to each — 'That, unfortunately, I am unable to do. Good-bye, good-bye' — and he was gone.

In the gardens beyond a band was playing a monotone to the rooks' parliament held over the elms, high in the blue ether.

CHAPTER II

MARBLE ARCH

THE year was drawing to a staid close.

In the Gardens and Park stretching far behind Number 9, the trees were bare; the last of the leaves swept up and carted into those fenced places within palisades where they were held safely for the moment when again gardeners would bring them forth and build new life of their decay. The branches were so still they might have been of steel; the rooks so high above them, so deep in silence, they seemed to be searching out new nesting-places in the sky. The squirrels had gone to sleep. The mist of early winter reigned supreme. After a boisterous interlude with many sudden changes and violent gales, London like the squirrels had snuggled down to see the winter pass.

People still moved about the Park walking briskly eschewing the wet grass but clad in warm coats and furs. The hatless brigade had vanished not because the cold was extreme, but because the mists were out — white in early morning, grey all day, dank at night. The lights clung in dim splotches along Bayswater Road; yet were brilliant at Piccadilly Circus where whisky and brands of soap held kaleidoscopic revel high in the dark.

Folk said we were on the threshold of another green winter; but no one could prove it. The almanacs which study phenomena and attempt to forecast events, doubtless had their views; the astronomers and experts in meteorology had theirs; the taxi-cab drivers theirs, and no one view coincided with another.

Phenomena scarcely troubled the crowds which assembled at Marble Arch, or stayed the processions of unemployed, drabble-tailed and weary, on their way up and down streets which reverberated with the clang of bands and the shaking of collecting boxes, each in a perfect unanimity of appeal.

Marble Arch had its say as always. The police took notes, exchanged winks and confidences . . . Battersea Park had its orators; Tower Hill its tub-thumpers — even as in those days long passed when John Burns told a listening House of Commons how he had stood in queue, a Minister, straight from His Majesty's Levee, but wrapped in an old coat and hat, to take his ticket for soup.

Zabern seemed to be as dead and forgotten as the cobbler who had been impaled in its gutter. Ships still came up the Thames and got into the docks laden as folk expected them to be; the papers published long lists of them, gave their names, the ports whence they came. And when no strike was in progress, a condition which sometimes occurred, the ships were unloaded by the men who stood in long queues in early morning on the chance that they might be required to unlade them.

Therefore in those smug times the warehouses were fat with bulging bins beyond all knowledge before, and since have steadily waned, as was ordained by those whose business it was to kill home industries and keep alive the foreigner.

It was curious to watch, in the half-light of those December days when mankind was approaching the apotheosis of content, the cross-currents of the great city everywhere thrown upon the screen for public opinion to dissect. From every printing-press came the wail of those who sought to renew man's confidence in the hospitals

and other great charities which languished for want of funds. Some primitive doctrine for the transfer of income from one class to another had harmed folk known as subscribers, and it had become necessary to find new sources of revenue in times when security seemed to wane.

Everywhere evidences of wealth abounded. Luxurious cars had taken their place in the streets; costly furs the place of old-time rugs and coats; but the hospitals stood with closed wards. Theatres simmered brazenly in theatre-land, lights twinkled; night was more light than day; music halls, restaurants, cinemas — all the new-found necessities of a world immersed in sight-seeing, week-ending, and games — were in evidence; lavishly bedizened to tickle the palette or scratch the back — which you chose — of pleasure-seekers — while the great charities were dying for lack of those subscriptions upon which they lived.

Father Vaughan thundered of indiscretions which some resented as false and some applauded as *ben trovato*. The Gloomy Dean stood to say his say or write his screed while no one listened and he earned the title by which he became known — known, that is to say, by the mysterious factor in publicity called 'the man in the street.'

Everywhere money was being expended on processions and riot; on a propaganda which no one heeded, and everywhere money was scarce. There were prophets who proclaimed our plight, and there were soothsayers who denied it, made light of it and pilloried the prophets.

Well — we are a free people; free to win freedom or to become slaves. The sun, some of us say in moments of self-assertive enthusiasm, never sets on our Empire. With equal truth one may assert that it never rises. For those existing on doles, soup tickets, and the chill thing known

as Charity; for those living in slums crowded and insani-
tary; hovels and other evidences of our Christian state —
there is no Empire. They are hungry — what boots it
whether their Empire is warmed by the sun, or cold like
the moon in spite of the sun? They are hungry. They are
without work. They might as well be dead . . . and in all
sobriety, they are in the right attitude to resent the quip
of a well-fed parson who, standing before his congrega-
tion, told it that 'the hungry man should thank his God
he knew not the sin of gluttony.'

Now some there were who although they did not hear
those words, resented the conditions in which they found
themselves, as it were, sucked from the beautiful country,
because the country could no longer support them, into
the glare and grind of a city too vast for conception, too
crowded to give them house-room.

Everywhere in the parks you saw these folk, amazingly
quiescent despite their condition, dim effigies of mankind
sprawling on the grass when the sun shone, huddled in
rags when it was cold; when the Embankment seats were
full; when the city's lavatories were closed against them.
Ne'er-do-wells we call them classing them in a herd; the
sunken twentieth, tenth, according to our light and judg-
ment; but wastrels now if once they had been honest men;
ready now to swell the crowded ranks of crime, if once
they had been clean; ready to line up and try to 'do the
bloke' at the Labour Exchange; ready to shuffle along in
processions for a tanner; ready to sit in carts for a bob
and add to the noise made by Suffragettes; ready to swell
the mob which presently would make head against Au-
thority — if what they heard had truth in it.

Revolution. That was the word noted. Bloody revolu-
tion.

Few understood it better than the musicians who perambulated the street with raucous songs or tinkling instruments. For the majority it was just one of those catchwords which the rich hold over the poor in order to lure them to greater misery. Revolution! Well — let it come. It could not hurt more terribly than starvation. Nothing could hurt them now — except work. They had no stomach for work at starvation prices. They swore it with eyes searching out the differences, the appalling inequalities which stood over them. Even the cattle were fed and made comfortable at night; put to bed, the key turned on them — But Man!

Was he not in the same case as the Son of Man who had no place to rest his head?

They had forgotten the Son of Man. To their misery had come also the added burden that Christ Himself was a myth.

If you offer a starving man food, he will not ask where you obtained it, but will eat it quickly lest you be inclined to withdraw it and he remain hungry. So with the thing we were beginning to know as propaganda. Propaganda is another word in the hands of those who twist them, for promises which no one can fulfil. If you offer promises to a man who has nothing, he accepts them in spirit if not in person. He waits; considers the promises; clutches them. Are they not words which offer to give him something for which he hungers?

Sheaves of these fallacies appear in propaganda. Show-ered lies some call them who have what they want. But promises — promises — promises which will be redeemed if you wait long enough and obey; which will give you something you have hungered to find. They came from the clouds it seemed. In the morning they were there —

like the *chaputti* which found its way to your verandah during the Mutiny, which no one had put there, but meant death.

So these things appeared — on the walls, under the knocker, within your gate, in the letter-box, waiting to be read. Like mushrooms they had sprung up in the night to lie on the soil which was the garden of England.

What could you do? The things were there. Why not read them, see for yourself what it was about. Why not? So folk read and some of the promises went to light fires and some were thrown into the dust bin and others were put aside by people who found things offered for nothing which usually cost much.

Somebody's land; somebody's house, clothes, money — things which you were without — given away. Given for nothing!

A man stood on a little platform at the corner of the Park, enunciating facts. He said they were religious facts, and implied that he questioned them. Clearly, therefore, he belonged to that stratum of critics which Haines dubbed 'The Queasy Folk' — people who attacked fundamental truths — or what you chose to call them.

The mist had thinned a little and the nearer lights in Edgware Road were grown more definite. The roar of the traffic had increased also and came down to that apex of railings where the man stood facing Marble Arch, as the hum of a monstrous loom. Behind were the trees, bare, stark against the sombre sky. Before, faces, scores of them, white in the lamp glare which fell upon them.

The orator hissed out words, sentences and sometimes bellowed them in the faulty accent of one who has learned his English perhaps in Russia, or Poland, or even France.

He passed from pianissimo to forte as easily as a snake moves over grass or rock and was as difficult to catch. These details became plain to the intelligence of a man who edged near and carried one arm in a sling. The closer he drew the more plain became the orator's method; the salt, he discovered, or perhaps he knew, came in those phrases which were sibilant, like the hiss of a snake; the shouted words, heard even by the police, a dozen yards distant, were innocuous.

The shouted words were in effect just facts which have been challenged year in and year out in some form or other ever since the birth of Christ. They related to the Nativity: questioned was He Messiah; was He greater than Plato, Socrates, and a score of others, Buddha and Mahomet included, or was He divine — the Son of God. The orator, standing at the edge of one of London's breathing spaces, within sound of London's groaning burden, was clearly of opinion that Christ was an impostor . . . a clever man, oh, yes! he shouted it, but the Son of God — No! Then swiftly, pianissimo — 'Teach your children that. Show them where freedom lies. You want blood. Blood is the cement you require to bind your groups together.' He seemed beside himself, boiling over in a strange tongue, which tied him and kept him straining.

Aloud, echoing to Marble Arch, came the words which seemed to continue the line of thought first transcribed. 'The Son of God!' He extended spread palms *Agnosco* in attitude. 'I am perplexed by my own reasoning. I am confronted by a contradiction in terms. God is a Spirit . . . was Mary, the Mother of Christ, also a Spirit? The data are misleading. We must reduce all to a common denominator.' Then with sibilant lips, so low, so swift

that only those near could hear him, he went on — 'Complete equality of all mankind is the aim . . . One or two generations of freedom, of licence, and we shall produce a new world, a new people. Man will come into his own — you and I, all who are hungry now. He will be vicious, cruel, egotistic — but he will make a new civilization, out of the new forces, vice — hell if you prefer . . . And for that we want blood — blood to cement the tribes into one . . .

'You want a guillotine in this country — one set up in your Fleet Street!' he shouted, his arms swinging to the four quarters. 'You want it to bring logicity into the brain of those who uphold myths' — the voice fell away to the ghost of itself — 'nothing is easier than to cut off heads; but to kill an idea is beyond man's power. If you doubt me, ask the Son of God . . . Phit!' — again he ended on a shrug of contempt.

The man who had penetrated almost to the rostrum moved back again. His hat with its turned-down brim sheltered his eyes. It would not be easy to recognize him, yet Wassiter stood revealed on the edge of the group when Effie Massenshaw met him. Wassiter but lately freed from the seclusion of Number 9.

Was it coincidence? Perhaps. Wassiter would never give that to the world. The challenging look, under the brim which shadowed those glowing but sinister eyes, would tell you nothing, nothing. There was no lifting of obscurity as he stood a moment bareheaded, smiling, to face Effie and her friend — Dorothea — the daughter of one of those Apostates of Dorking who had dared again to come abroad without a lead. With a word he put the ball in play —

'Truant!' he said, with that quizzical air which was so baffling.

'Who is truant — you or I?' Effie asked.

'Obviously your friend, Miss Nesbit — whom I seem to recollect as banned.'

Dorothea turned this without touching it. 'But is it wise for you to be about in crowds — just now?'

'Crowds have a psychology worth studying,' he smiled.

'And you heard what he said about . . . about Christ and the Virgin Mary?'

'Yes.'

'I was wishing, longing to answer him,' Dorothea flared, her cheeks glowing.

'Then why did you keep silence?'

'Why, if you heard him, did you?'

'Oh, well' — he shrugged with the words — 'it seemed scarcely worth while.'

'I don't agree.'

'Dorothea! my dear,' Effie cooed, 'we shall miss your train if you insist on discussing the ethics of Christianity. Do be good!'

'I refuse to be good in the presence of one who sneers,' said unmuzzled Dorothea.

'Miss Nesbit' — Wassiter gave them jointly — 'must acquit me of bias. The man was criticising a piece of literature which I have not studied . . . I am more concerned with living authors than with the dead. I wish sometimes I knew nothing of either, I should then perhaps be able to tell you whether the great Zaneschagin is novelist or chemist.'

'You know him?' Effie asked, as they crossed the road to reach a bus.

'Of course.'

'Have you read his last book?'

'Yes.'

‘What is it about?’

‘I don’t know — mainly words: very beautiful and appropriate words, of course.’

‘You don’t encourage one to study him,’ Dorothea grumbled, uncertain what to believe or disbelieve.

‘How can I, when my analytical powers are so undeveloped I cannot tell you what he is?’

They came to the curb where busses from the heart of the City turn to go down Park Lane on their way to Victoria. Here Dorothea climbed on board with a last word to Effie — ‘Mind! we shall expect you on Thursday. *Au revoir!*’

‘*Au revoir et bon chance!*’ from Effie. Then she turned with Wassiter and walked back to the Park, took the path beside Bayswater Road and presently asked —

‘Who was that man?’

‘Which?’

‘The one who talks over there with two voices.’

‘Two voices? Forgive me. I scarcely comprehend.’

Effie made no excursion into his mental processes, but said directly — ‘I thought I saw you making your way from the centre of the crowd. I was mistaken. But that is the man I spoke of. Who is he?’

‘How should I know? And why trouble me with a catechism if I do?’

‘Forgive me. I was interested in what he said. He seemed to know his subject . . . but he spoke with two voices, which is unusual — one for people of intelligence, and one for the mob.’

‘Really? That is very instructive . . .’

She faced him as they drew near a lamp and said again —

‘Who is he?’

He shrugged it off with — ‘Doubtless some anarchist.’
‘Was it Zaneschagin?’

‘Alas!’ said Alan Wassiter, ‘that, I fear, is a question I cannot answer.’

She watched him as he said it. He did not appear to know it; yet in her mind Effie accepted his reply without questioning it. Of course that man was Zaneschagin. Of course, too, Alan Wassiter was aware she knew it. What would you have? Were they not similarly engaged in stirring the British people from that attitude of placid content which had become so abhorrent to the intelligence of both worlds? Were they not on the eve of victory — the victory for which she had fought since she came from college?

She had returned from a rather troublesome meeting with Dorothea who had graduated at the same college, Dorothea the pal of those harum-scarum Haines boys who had championed her in downright sailor fashion; one of whom, no doubt, some day would win her and break her as is the way with husbands all the world over. And the question which had set them all by the ears, was just this one of faith, belief, and ‘the convention which compels a woman to sacrifice herself on the altar of marriage.’ Her own phrase, dinned into the ears of thousands at lectures and on hustings — or what to all intents were hustings in those riotous days.

Of course the dear padre, as Dorothea called the rector, figured very largely in the debate. Dorothea upheld his view. She was even a little tired of the suggestion that a vote won by the women of England would cure the various diseases which existed. It seemed, indeed, that at last Dorothea’s godfather, Admiral Sir Douglas Clancy, had won her over to his way of thinking and that Dorothea

would pass from her friend's side — mainly because she would not agree that marriage was degradation *in excelsis* and nothing less . . . After all, Effie questioned as she walked, did it matter what Dorothea believed?

They had come nearly to the Lancaster Gate exit from the Park when Wassiter drew her from her thoughts by saying — as though he had read them —

'You are worried by this controversy over matters which wise folk accept or reject undiscussed. If I may say a word in all respect and sincerity — I think you can afford to neglect all side issues. They are ephemera. They are debatable matters which will wear out your strength if you persist in thinking of them. Is that wise?'

'I shall miss Dorothea terribly if she decides to stand aside.'

'She will stand aside,' he told her as they went down the slope beyond the Park gates. 'She is one of the type who marry.'

'I agree. Sooner or later she will be tied fast in spite of me.'

'Because of you, rather — is it not?' he asked.

'How?'

She halted one moment amazed that he should have questioned her, and instantly walked as before — the one word on her lips; flame on her cheeks.

'I think often,' he said quietly. 'It is more possible to influence people by making a statement and then leaving it to, what you call, soak in; than by any amount of debate or argument, or protest or explanation.'

And again, after a moment's hesitation she said — 'Yes — I think you are right.'

'If, for instance, I said to you — "I love you," and said no more; I think you would experience greater interest in

me than if I were to expatiate for an hour on my knees . . .
My view, of course. I may be wrong.'

She did not tell him what would be her answer, or how such a question would affect her; she said, without affectation or restraint — 'Your speech is so nearly perfect that most people would take you for an Englishman; but "*influenze*" and the other day "*e-wee lamb*" rather gave you away. You must learn to cure these slips. I am tired — I will take a taxi here.' They came to the stand opposite the tube station and she halted smiling at his look of assumed concern. 'No — no! Just a little tired. Nothing more. Yes, come by all means. My mother will be glad to see you.'

And in fifteen minutes after being twice held up, they reached the portals of Number 9.

CHAPTER III

A DIVERSION

WHEN Effie Massenshaw reached Low Willows, the home of the Nesbits on Leith Hill, the day was grey and opalescent; while a sou'west wind sweeping up the hillside carried the Channel tang in its arms. From Selsey Bill and Arundel it came, the scent of couch-fires on the nearer Downs accompanying it. The smoke rose like a blue haze, and fell on the slopes down there amidst the trees which Dorothea had learned to know and love in those splendid years when she had learned to run blindfold in the rectory grounds where Jag and Jimmy Haines held court.

In the background, of course, other folk appeared, when affairs demanded their presence. There was 'Daddy' whose surname was Nesbit, and 'the Old Man' who was father to the two who ruled in the rectory gardens and did their best long ago to tear branches from a nearly perfect cedar. Naturally, fathers who were immersed, the one in astronomy — which as Alan Wassiter said is the science of searching out the heavens with a telescope — and the other in the Church — which according to the same authority is the science of examining Heaven through the Bible — had scant leisure to attend to the everyday occurrences in their homes. And as it is accepted that Eve persuaded Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit without first telling him of her talk with the serpent, it may be accepted that Dorothea was the vivacious and essential plotter in all those escapades which

the Haines boys loved to remember when they were far from her influence.

Then it was that Dorothea with much time on her hands sought out Effie and even told her some of her exploits, while Mrs. Nesbit smiled and said she was glad the Haines boys were at sea; for, were they rooted permanently in Dorking, Dorothea would certainly grow up more boy than girl.

Of course Effie knew all about these various influences, and later, when she had taken up the cudgels in defence of women, she sought and to some extent persuaded Dorothea that it was her duty to stand with those who fought to win power for her downtrodden sex. At the time, in the first flush of activity, Dorothea seemed to be as thorough-paced a fighter as any who then joined the movement. She was very young, barely seventeen, and very ready to champion lost causes; but when Jimmy came back from a cruise with the Atlantic Fleet, and later, when Jag arrived from the East, and both threw cold water on 'the Cause,' she reconsidered her position and kept in the background as far as possible without absolutely severing her friendship with Effie.

If the rector at this time had taken it upon himself to ban the Cause, there is very little doubt but that Dorothea and her mother and the rest of the Haines family would have taken no part in the agitation. But Mr. Haines held the view that all taxpayers should be able to vote, women as well as men, and he advocated the plea on platforms as one of simple justice and a necessary change with all the force for which he was famous. Then came the new issue; this fighting programme, and neither Madge Haines nor her mother were seen again in the tents of the Militants.

Mrs. Nesbit, dear, quiet lady, gave it as her opinion that Dorothea should withdraw finally on this afternoon of splendid opalescence; but she did not stay to see Effie. She thought Dorothea, as she called her, would be able to come to the right decision better in her absence. Mr. Nesbit was in his room sleeping after lunch and making ready for an all-night vigil with the stars — Venus, as the family understood it, being in conjunction.

Of course this meant that Dorothea would have to fight for her own hand, a mode of warfare which scarcely appealed to the girl. Yet there she sat presently in the window seat, chin on palm while Effie unmasked her guns. Effie was serious, too. It seems she felt the matter very keenly and was prepared with documents and pleadings to win her case. Dorothea hated rows. Effie seemed rather to enjoy them. Perhaps that was the reason Dorothea when she saw her friend coming up the drive rushed to the telephone and implored Jag or Jimmy Haines to come up and create a diversion.

Jag wanted to know in what direction, and Dorothea through the mouthpiece exclaimed — ‘Oh! Any old diversion. Only be quick, both of you.’

Effie was at the door, Williams, Mr. Nesbit’s butler, already opening it, when Dorothea concluded her talk and rushed to take up her place on the window seat.

And now Effie sat in a comfortable chair, her legs crossed, her frock correctly tugged into position and said after the usual greetings: ‘Look here, old girl — it’s going to be pretty rotten if you go back on us too. Suppose we have a talk?’

Dorothea sighed and said with an air of restraint — ‘Yes — Let’s!’

That seemed to provide a loophole. Dorothea supposed

that Effie would unbutton her despatch case and begin to pour out facts; but she said instead — 'Now why exactly are you backing down?'

'Well, you see —' Dorothea explained, or rather began to explain, and then stopped.

'Yes?' Effie questioned, calm to distraction.

'I don't think Dad would like me to go on ...'

'Have you asked him?'

'No,' Dorothea had not.

'Well, but won't you?'

'Dad hates rows. He says they were invented by the devil to make good men swear. And that,' Dorothea asserted, 'is the only reason I have for not getting Mother to ask him.'

'But surely there need be no row?'

'No — not a noisy one. It's worse than that when Dad has his routine disturbed ... it's ... it's quiet and very, very ... oh, what's the word I want? ...' Dorothea tapped out, finger on knee.

'Very much to the point?' Effie asked.

'No — not that, though of course it *is* to the point all the same ... er ... I have it ... sarcastic. Quiet and very sarcastic. That's horrid.'

Effie smiled. She knew that Dorothea was fencing, but not that she was fencing for time. She looked at her and said — 'Yes — sarcasm is a pretty deadly mode of attack, but I am astonished that your father should use it on you.'

'Oh, he doesn't mean to be sarcastic; only you see he's always in the clouds, looking for stars and nebulae and things like that — and if we pull him down to earth, we have to explain all over again. Then, when we have finished, he looks at Mum and says, "I think, my dear, we

have considered this before. I dislike change. Unless some very important" — Dorothea enlarged upon his manner — "reason is forthcoming — of which you are the best judge, I think I would rather the matter remained as we decided" . . . And there we are — helpless,' said Dorothea.

They thrashed over this for ten minutes by the clock, then Dorothea sprang to her feet, threw up a window and leaned out: 'I believe someone's coming!' she cried. 'It's a car!' Dorothea turned to face Effie with this and again leaned over the sill.

The soft, damp air streamed past her carrying the scent of newly washed earth, a hint of couch, and the distinct whirr of machinery. Certainly a car approached! They both listened, Effie because she was amused at all this camouflage, Dorothea because she saw relief at hand. Hurrah! She could have shouted. Now there would be no row, they could just have tea and cake and enjoy themselves — which was not exactly what Effie supposed her mission would be when she accepted that engagement two days earlier near Marble Arch. The noise increased, it became a whirr of changing gear . . . something approaching the horrible diffidence arising from a Ford when you seek to persuade it to start.

'It sounds like a machine gun,' said Effie. Then she, too, rose and came close to the window.

'Somebody breaking down . . . and on our drive,' Dorothea surmised. 'The next thing we shall know, they will be coming up and asking to use our telephone. Shall we go out and see?'

'Better wait and see,' came from Effie with the necessary sting.

'Now *you* are sarcastic, dear child,' Dorothea piped.

'Come! I can't wait! They will wake Dad if that noise goes on, then there will be a row.'

'Why — is he asleep?'

'Yes. He's got to be up to see Venus to-night. There's a conjunction, you know, and if —'

'That is a conjunction, too, isn't it?' Effie purred.

'Very well, we will go and see,' she conceded, because it seemed hopeless to consider discussion while that noise went on. Explosions *in petto* shook the air as Dorothea came in to open a French window —

'And now it's back-firing,' she laughed. 'What a horrible noise . . . It must be a Ford, come along!'

They stepped out, caught arms and moved down the drive. Two minutes later they came upon the cause of it. A car near the gates, someone at the wheel, someone standing up in the back seat, someone lying on the gravel while the machine buzzed and kicked over him.

'More juice —' said a voice.

Apparently the order was obeyed, for the noise was redoubled.

Dorothea, stifling laughter and bending near Effie's ear, said —

'I believe it's the Haines' car!'

'As though any other in the world could create such a disturbance,' Effie called back. 'Did you expect them?'

Dorothea did not happen to hear. She said — 'Oh! what a lark! Do let us run and see what's the matter,' and actually commenced to do so; but Effie made a very firm stand there. They continued to move as ladies should when under the observation of young men little older than boys. Dorothea gave her war-cry instead; she explained that was necessary, for otherwise how could they hear them coming?

Apparently someone had heard, for suddenly a voice said — 'Jag, you blighter, here's the Lady Lucinda, otherwise Dorothea . . . can't remember which — Get out and scrape off the mud.'

Then he faced towards the house, waved his hand and shouted — 'Had a bust-up! Something's gone wrong with the works. Jag's trying to patch her up.'

That was very plain. The noise seemed to diminish as they came together and Jag Haines emerged from his bed. He shook himself and patted garments which showed little signs of mud, while Madge opened her door and ran to meet them, crying — 'Oh! I am glad you came. I don't think we shall ever get her to the door — to say nothing of getting her home.'

Jag and Jimmy advanced capless — 'Just our luck,' said the former. 'When she bucks she bucks . . .'

'Like Buffalo Bill's Broncho Buster,' Jimmy added.

'And I did so want you to come over to the rectory for tea,' Madge put in. 'I've got some lovely cakes and everybody's out.'

'Come and have tea with us instead,' Dorothea suggested.

'What about the car? Can't leave her here,' Jimmy decided.

'Push her.'

Jag's notion this; one which seemed feasible and was speedily put into operation, Effie laughing and breathless as the rest.

'Jolly?' she cried answering Jimmy's clipped question. 'Rather! Just like a bit of old times again.'

'Why not cut out the new?' Jimmy hazarded, shoulder to the car.

'Because I'm too deep in it . . . because I love it . . .

because only cowards fail when those who look to them call!' She panted it out, sentence by sentence, looking him straight in the eyes and Jimmy's fell.

'Yes,' he said. 'That's the game. We've got to play it out — if we begin . . . but — er — I say, though, fen churches . . . I'm not a saint and don't expect to find a halo; but I draw the line there. Honour bright. It's not done . . .'

They paused with the car in safety, talking in pairs, Jag, as Effie saw, beside Dorothea, who was pouring nonsense into his ears — Madge aiding and abetting her.

'Why did someone call out "more juice"?' came from Dorothea's smiling lips.

'Oh! that . . . that was just to "create a diversion,"' the girl laughed, while Jag looked wise and remained silent.

The phrase was not lost on Effie. It seemed to explain the inexplicable; yet the context remained blank. The knowledge that it was so perhaps lent additional sting to her rejoinder as she faced Jimmy once more —

'We cannot afford to lose. We are fighting with our backs to the wall, and if the politicians don't give way, we shall burn whether it is done or not done.'

Jimmy, sauntering by her side towards the door, seemed to weigh this and to find it inexcusable. 'It's not my show,' he said in the clipped phrasing he had learned at Osborne and Dartmouth. 'Don't know much about it and don't want to . . . thought I'd like to give you the tip, though . . .'

'Tip?'

'The old man has his knife into that Wassiter person to begin with . . . and when that happens I find it best to . . .'

'Never mind Alan Wassiter,' Effie put in.

'Right-o! Sorry. Still — don't let any of your' — he lowered his voice a trifle — 'torch-bearers try their games on the old man's church . . . or I'm afraid . . .' he paused on the threshold of the Hall and added, his eyes on hers — 'they'll get it in the neck.'

'Get it — what?'

'The hose.'

Effie remained silent, watching.

'Shouldn't risk it, if I were you,' Jimmy added.

'No,' she answered, 'I agree it would not be wise.'

And Jimmy in high feather over this concession recounted to Dorothea and Madge the success of his efforts in the direction of peace. It seemed then that all the churches in the neighbourhood were relying on their hose; all the water towers in Surrey, Sussex, and the home counties generally, were charged to the brim and the pressure would be abnormal. They laughed over these facts when Effie presently rose and said she hated to tear herself away, and departed with heightened colour after kissing Dorothea. They laughed, indeed, so buoyantly that when Mrs. Nesbit came in to fill the gap caused by Effie's exit, she considered it wise to put in a word of caution. She was sorry Effie refused to withdraw her war on churches especially, but it would be well to remember that, after all, hose were rather vulnerable, were they not? Suppose someone cut the hose — what then?

'Oh! but they will never dare,' Madge cried out, flustered at the notion.

'I'm afraid they will,' Jag answered. 'No, I did not think of that.'

'No — but I did,' Jimmy announced, 'and I've got a scheme to fluster 'em.'

'How? How?' came from them all nearly as one word.

'Dig 'em in,' said Jimmy.

'Dig what in?' asked the women while Jag's smile expanded visibly.

'The hose,' said Jimmy. 'I wanted to save the old man that expense and so I told Effie to keep off the turf in that direction. And she said, "Be hanged if I will." So now we'd better set about getting 'em dug in all round this end . . . or,' he concluded, 'we'll be asking for it.'

In the midst of this discussion a maid entered with the evening's mail which she handed to Mrs. Nesbit. The letters remained unopened and unlooked at for some minutes while Jag and Jimmy explained their process. Pressures, rubble, trenches, and the means of keeping the hose from being 'squashed flat' as the latter put it, were arranged; then Mrs. Nesbit, who had been turning her letters, came upon one bearing the official seal and superscription of Admiralty. She twisted it again, examined the handwriting, and said to Dorothea — 'I wonder what my cousin has to say now?'

'Not Sir Douglas, Mums? Oh! do look, he writes such delicious letters.'

'*Not* the Admiral, Mrs. Nesbit?' Jimmy challenged.

'On the contrary — *the* Admiral, my dear boy. Yes — I think I may be forgiven if I open it. Sir Douglas is nothing if not outright.'

She tore the envelope and began to read, her smile broadening, while the young people sat envying her. At last with a touch of laughter, she said — 'No one else could write that. It refers to us, or to those, rather, who thought with us and now are disappointing. I will read it if you care to hear it. It is a message . . .'

'Do, do!' came in chorus from Dorothea and her

friends simultaneously, while Mrs. Nesbit settled her glasses afresh.

Floreat Etona — et hoc genus omne, my dear Flora. Are you still with the wild-women? And if so why? I do not recognize my cousin in that galley — especially now that we approach the rocks. What Rocks? I leave it unsaid — *Deo volente* we shall escape . . . But mind you, by the skin of our teeth. You accept of course my view and do not lose sight of the fact that the material in question would not save a cat from drowning.

A messenger came to me last night with words that helped me sleep. I call men and gods to witness my heart ached, and sleep was far from me. It came in words which might, in years long sunk in time, have bid me rise and come to your assistance; but now brought peace instead.

'At the last minute,' so ran the phrase, 'while yet the sun hung over the hills, the Queasy Folk stand alone.' I could have shouted! But the Messenger was beautiful, veiled, and already quitting my side . . . therefore I made answer as one should. 'God be praised!' said I, and turned me to sleep.

What of the Astronomer? Has he no words of prophetic insight from his study of the Heavens? Remind him that Venus moves across the path of Luna to-night and that Mars burns red farther afield . . . Venus in the arms of Luna while Mars glowers behind a screen of words is sheer lunacy. How otherwise could it be seeing they both are women?

Forgive me! That quip escaped. I cry my fault and make my prayer remembering a certain maiden very beautiful in mine eyes — Dorothea, to wit, who is, or was, of these Queasy ones. Has she, too, shaken off the trammels? If not, God give me patience! If not, God give her wisdom as His angel gave me sleep.

If not? . . . well —

Remember what may be done with a jib when a ship is in stays . . .

Remember also the influence of a curb when the snaffle has proved ineffectual. Shake it in her face. Tell her to make her peace with me before it is too late — If . . .

Tell her I grow old and wield a pen only when I must, and that — if . . .

Yours

DOUGLAS CLANCY

Dorothea rose when the reading ceased and crossed to her mother's side —

'He's a dear,' she said swiftly. 'And I must tell him so. I shall ring him up now — at once . . . or, perhaps he won't sleep to-night . . .'

She went out without waiting a reply, and when eventually she found him at Whitehall, she said —

'I've been chasing you for half an hour. Mummie read your letter to us and I had wet eyes. The jib won't be wanted. Don't hit me. I'm with my own people again . . .'

A voice blared in the receiver which seemed to say 'Hurrah!' and she went on presently —

'No . . . I did it off my own bat. She came to persuade me and I was afraid, so I called up Jag and Jimmy . . .'

'Who?'

'Jag and Jimmy Haines, you remember?'

'I seem to remember the names — well?'

'And they created a diversion . . .'

'Which of them?' came through with a laugh that was plain.

'Both,' said Dorothea. 'And I've told you . . . so you can sleep . . . and you need not say "If" any more . . . Good-bye.'

CHAPTER IV

RAIN AND DARKNESS

'It was at thy door and not on mine, O friend, the Angel with the amaranthine wreath descended, and pausing, knocked,' Dorothea sang that night when the astronomer had gone to his eerie and the room was still.

She did not know her words held any relation to affairs as they were; nor did Jag or Jimmy or Madge who had stayed to dinner and now sat under the spell of her beautiful contralto. These things rarely appear at the moment. Sometimes they never appear, never find comment. Yet they recur and thought becomes tense.

Dorothea had been well trained. She sang naturally, with her soul as well as her voice and the resonance was full and round; but to-night, perhaps under the influence of the Admiral's letter she sang with intense feeling. Was it delight at having obtained her freedom or because through some process of telepathy she was in touch with Effie, her old, old friend, who was out there in the dark leading some kind of forlorn hope and Dorothea thrilled at the knowledge?

The wind was fresh, the night black, the Ford standing patiently under the lee of trees and shrubs, her hood up, taking without malice her share of the rain squalls which come cold and vicious across the farther Downs. Dorothea looked out before she commenced to sing, turned round and said — 'It's worse than ever. It's raining cats and dogs. What shall we do?'

Jag who was near said — 'Sing,' in the voice of one who

can command, and Dorothea sang. She sang for half an hour, then said, 'I vote for bridge. It will make us forget.'

Forget what? Had she been asked she could not have said at that moment what she desired to forget. She might have told them she 'had a lump in her throat,' and that would have been true. Yet she could not have assigned a reason without increasing the lump.

In other words, Haines' church was safe for the nonce, its barricades intact, the 'iron door' as it was called, when in truth it was made of stout wire, still remained locked, the hose ready should any visitors attempt to wreck the beautiful interior. For at this time women were stalking the land with hammers and knives; windows fell before them, pictures were slashed in the galleries, books mutilated as though by some occult process these treasures had conspired to throw scorn on the Women's Movement, and should bear the brunt of their attack. When locks and bars and hose had been organized against this, the raiders marched quite freely to attack the pillar boxes and post-offices with chemicals and fire. Nothing came amiss to them. If one church were safely barred and bolted, another would be found standing open — asking for it, as Jimmy said. Scouts were abroad. Women they were for the most part, but here and there with a sprinkling of men. Laugh at Government — that was the word! Make it look foolish! Knock it off its stool . . . and in the background were Alan Wassiter, Mrs. Massenshaw, and Effie organizing attacks, bailing out prisoners, ordering others to refuse food, to resist forcible feeding, while speakers pleaded on platform and in Hall for freedom to die of starvation. Self-determination *in esse* before self-determination as a phrase sanctifying revolution had got

itself hatched. Self-dissolution — suicide in other words in order to compel a Government which ruled with a quip to cease injuring women's mouths and teeth by the operation they termed forcible feeding. And out of that quagmire of futility great men produced a silly enactment which the quick-witted opposers of Government dubbed 'The Cat and Mouse Act,' and instantly scored. Apt it was. The Man in the Street knows what he knows. He said it was apt, and instantly, as though the crowd waited on him, a great bunch of that puzzled electorate which stood asking to be led, 'flopped' in the words of a scribe to the woman's side.

He who threatens public opinion, dies of it. He who threatens the god which Democracy has set up, dies of his master's anger. He who runs counter to the popular whim, be it for games, or doles, or the shutting of shops at a certain hour, dies at the polls when next Ministers are compelled to face the music.

That paraphrased was Alan Wassiter's prophecy, the view alike of Harold, Effie, and Mrs. Massenshaw. What others thought was of less importance. It is the leader whom the gods first make mad. The rest follow as sheep sheep.

The Ministry was vanquished when it attempted to show the humanity of its act. The Militants played on that string with consummate skill. They played until the whole structure wobbled; until in the Eastern Marches bordering on Vistula the Mailed Fist was seen again lifted, while the voice was heard of him who cried to those mad ones bidding them prepare . . . But those who heard stuffed their ears, and those who saw put on blue spectacles so that they might no longer see — even as it had been prophesied.

Far out in the rain and darkness of that night of nights in the home of Dorothea, three cars moved by different roads towards a little, old church standing on the uplands far beyond Dorking.

One came from the beautiful old town lying in the shadow of Box Hill, another from the strange house known here as Red Gables, and one from Canterbury, the holy city of all pilgrims. They did not enter the village which was their rendezvous together; nor did they put up their cars at the same inn. Yet the women who came over the roads met after dining and presently stood in a group in the churchyard beneath a yew which screened them all from the rain.

It was quite a beautiful old church. Rich it was in monuments, rich in coloured glass. A Crusader lay with prayerful hands beneath the canopy his children had found him. A reredos of ancient carving, some old brasses in choir and aisle. People who do not believe in God and have no use for churches coincided here with those who do. It stood on high ground, lord of the sleeping village; its square battlemented tower solemn above the churchyard, the beautiful glass of its windows, mellowed by time and the witchery of an art we seem to have lost. High up was the sundial with brazen face and style alert to throw shadow. Battlements crowned the aisles; the roof was grey and green and yellow with the passage of years; the walls lichen-clad and touched by the same soft shades while before the great western door stood the yews shading a corner of the acre which was God's.

Nothing moved but the wind. No sound fell but that of pattering rain; the gurgle of water in the gutters and the thin trickle from gargoyles set for its escape. No lights, no custodians, no bars or bolts yet shot to keep

folk from the interior. In the still greyness of that wintry evening the place stood inviting onslaught, courting it — plainly and without bombast a house of prayer.

Who would desecrate it or attack it? Since Cromwell and his Ironsides it had stood unassailed by ikon-smashers. The clash of creeds had made no great mark upon it, the futilities of Convocations none. It was less filled with worshippers at some periods; more crammed at others — that is all. Taxation had left it poorer: but the walls, the windows, even some of the old high pews remained. Who would attack it — old, venerable, beautiful? Not the villagers. Not the countryside. Self-determination had not come so far. The thought alone was infamy. It remained for those of the Town to show what may be done with torch and the cunning use of petrol.

A short consultation beneath the trees and those who had seemed to stand irresolute moved to the door. It opened without difficulty and the women passed through. No men. Women all of them . . . of the sex which we are told fainted not long ago, if caught by darkness near a churchyard.

Well, well! It may be so; but now was not. They came from the churchyard and entered upon the darkness within — flashing torches. Leaders in one of the new battles. They came past the bell-ropes — should they cut them? They did . . . high up in the belfry where owls sailed on soft wings of escape. They came down and stood before a carved oak screen, reading the names of those who had ministered to the needs of men — should they despoil it? The fire would do that. Pass on!

Then, too, they came upon the old leaden font graven

and embossed with the signs of the zodiac; the font where children arrived to be baptized, washed white of sins they had not committed — should they smash it, tumble it from its perch? It should have given those who entered and opened small electric torches as they passed, some message which women should feel more keenly than men. Perhaps it did. They left it standing and passed each on her way to her duty.

Judas Iscariot, when he betrayed his Lord and had taken the price, went out and hanged himself; but the women of England, when they betrayed their Cause, made all sure for the flames; left the church to its natural guardians and entered their cars for home. For supper possibly, when they reached it — for they would be hungry; perhaps to stand at the table and make their report . . . and then to bed. Would they sleep? Did they? There were six of them and three chauffeurs. Nine all told, to brazen it out or bedew their pillows with tears. Which?

Does it matter?

Away! All matters. Did they sleep when the lights were out and they knew the soft contagion of down pillows on rain-whipped faces or did they lie awake thrilled to the quick by the knowledge that at all hazards, in spite of the unkind weather, the old church flamed as they had seen when on a farther hilltop they paused to look back and found the red flare still leaping in the dark. Did they sleep?

A blotch of yellow flame, which would mark for all time the escutcheon of those who lighted it, surely called for wakefulness.

CHAPTER V

CRITICAL

WHAT a stirring was here! What loose thinking! What exasperation among those smitten! Yet the arming of Ulster and of the Nationalists which troubled M'Grath and the Curragh so definitely, had but small meaning for all that section of the English people who were outside the arena of politics. In comparison with the stir created by the band of Women known as the Militants, now that their programme was in operation, the unrest in Ireland was a mere cypher.

One cannot wonder at that, anomalous as it appears, for Ireland was distant and not very vocal; the Militants near and incessant in their clamour. The Militants, too, were in possession of what soldiers call interior lines — London and the home Counties their field; Ulster and the Nationalists were in the wilderness, undiscussed by the majority of English papers. There was a feeling, too, with regard to Ireland that was inevitable from the persistence with which for years it had kept its grievances alive. Men said that since the days of Cromwell, who had but partially cured them, the Irish had never ceased to war and struggle and present bills for the English people to pay. In this long period it seemed that even English patience was exhausted; that she was tired of considering the complaints of her sister nation and inclined to agree with certain critics who stated openly that failing fifty years of strong Government, nothing would pacify Ireland but a tidal wave of sufficient volume to pass over the whole land and sink it where it lay.

But of the Militants — women warring with astonishing immunity in their midst; posing as martyrs and heroically cheering others to the attack when comrades failed, England was not tired; nor was she ashamed, nor alarmed. Their attitudinizing was taken as a Show, something amusing, by those who remained untouched, and this in spite of the fact that it was very generally believed that the Wild women were dancing to music they did not create and were following a pied piper whose spiritual home was east of the Vistula.

Effie Massenshaw scoffed at this, and the man in the street, the indefinite article who rules our rulers, echoed her opinion in words not hers. 'Chut!' he said in effect. 'That's all my eye and Betty Martin . . . The *Barnacle*, which tells the story, is a Tory rag at best. Who believes in it? Not me. Besides, what about the *Daily Lullaby* and the *Daily Crier*; do they believe it? Not 'alf.' He pushed it from him with the necessary adjectives and went about his business as a ruler should. But Ministers, less certain of their popularity than the man in the street supposed, looked ahead and astern; casting the lead from both gangways as they trailed through the shallows. On the one side they found rock, on the other sand; both equally efficient to wreck the ship, and out of the twain they produced a formula which played for safety. The woman took hold of it, held it up to scorn. 'The Cat-and-Mouse Act!' they cried. 'Man's incompetence advertised to the world. Look at it! What does it mean but torture . . . torture prolonged, drawn out so that man may watch us die . . .'

It was the death knell of the Government which produced it. If the people of England had been less weary of the interminable unrest, more certain of the factors which

governed political intrigue, they would have risen and made an end of both cat and mice, but because they were very efficiently hoodwinked they scoffed only and Ministers took heart.

Many moves followed; some open, some subtle; but the women — under Effie and her friends kept on their way. They appeared to take no notice of this by-play until the Secretary of a Man, great in the opinion of his Chiefs, approached Effie Massenshaw and persuaded her to listen. The great Man who was his Master — all duly stressed as was essential — believed that if the opposing parties could but meet at a Round Table Conference, a way might be found to produce peace; why not meet him halfway? But Effie, in the absence of her mother who was touring the country, was in no mood for conference either at a round or a square table. She declined to table anything but the speeches she made and the victories of her followers.

Why should she? Were not the Militants winning, and, in spite of Government and wholesale smashing of windows, was not public opinion on the side of those who fought? 'Did Government imagine,' she asked in public, 'it had discovered a formula to take the place of "wait and see," in this thing women dubbed "The Cat-and-Mouse Act"? If so, let it send representatives to the meetings where the Act was discussed and take down, without *suppressio veri*, the attitude of the Public . . . and that was her last word.'

Other and more subtle moves ensued. All the batteries of those opposed to the extension of the suffrage were unmasked. Some extraordinary letters found their way to Effie's keeping. She found herself sought sometimes in marriage, sometimes by cranks who perhaps might club

her or go on their knees to her; sometimes by that stratum of Society which is known in the world of politics as Leaders of this Party who bid the world wait and see. Men and women who moved in high circles showered invitations upon her for dinner, or lunch, or soiree. Her photograph was in all the shop windows; even in those which her comrades had smashed.

She was a nightmare to the police who might only chivvy her, and she was a heroine to the crowd. She was suffering and laughed at it. She had a quip or a jest for every blow, and was in danger of swelled head at a time when her exertions made her thin, and her mental anguish conspired to unbalance her. Paddy M'Grath called to her at every turn, and she in every movement called back to him. She loved and knew that she loved. She loved and hated herself for her love; strove by all means to push it from her soul and went with wet eyes to her bed acknowledging her lapse.

She cared nothing for Society or for its blandishments, yet would sit often with Grand Dames of the Political World, laugh with them, listen to their clever offers of entanglement and come out strong and reliant as she went in. But in the silence of her own chamber she saw always the picture of this man who had won her, whom she had won and refused; who still was her friend, her pal, as she said; the one man in the world she could love, who was eating his heart out at the Curragh and sending letters daily which said without words how cursed was life now that she no longer took part in it . . . Words! Words! All of them words which she hugged in her heart and carried with her, aching at the knowledge that they were true.

There is no peril greater than the peril induced by

memories passionate as these. There is no anguish more subtly framed to sap one's strength than anguish of the mind. Yet Effie battled with it, pushed it from her, and found it still grappling with her; crowing of victory, triumphant in look and gesture. She believed that if she surrendered to love, love would extinguish her. Initiative would cease. All her life this had been drilled into her sensitive and alert mind, and now the battle was joined, which of them would win — Effie or M'Grath; heredity or schooling; the sceptic woman or the Churchman? Who of them! Who of them! It echoed as a question even in her dreams.

How deep were these emotions showed very little in Effie's manner or appearance. She was thinner than when she returned from India, her eyes held a persistent note of sadness; dark eyes, sorrow-laden. She was ready to sit alone more often than of old. John Stuart Mill, though frequently in her lap, no longer held her thoughts. Dreams came instead, all the anguish and beauty of them to trouble her day.

These facts were apparent to Mrs. Massenshaw when she returned from her tour; but to Harold and Mary Sladen they were less noticeable, or were put down to the girl's burden of organization.

True, that was sufficiently overwhelming. The Cause moved machine-like to its triumph and Effie moved with it. Nothing else appeared to the casual watcher. Effie glowed when evidence was brought to her of victory. She recognized whither she moved, that Ministers by their inherent bungling of a plain issue had made it certain the women would win. Wassiter hammered at this thesis — 'Give them rope,' he would say. 'Give them all they re-

quire and they will hang at the next election.' Whether he believed in his words or they were just a flourish did not appear. That was his method.

But Authority seemed in no mood to consider these issues. Perhaps it elected to remain blind to the consequences or chose hope for its loadstar here as in another field, where, in spite of warnings and the reports of its emissaries, it refused to believe in the approach of war. The only consideration which stirred it was the strength or weakness of its majority in the House. By a long process of argument, through long years of dreary and never-ending debate, men had come to believe in the inherent peacefulness of European Nations. They were firmly convinced that those who saw danger and attempted to warn the country of its approach were fools, or scaremongers, or both. They did their best to make England believe there was no danger of war — and in a similar fashion tried to persuade people that they had played a fair game in this matter of the Suffrage. But England knew better. The women's propaganda; the wit and humour and honesty of purpose they maintained, were proof against the unstatesmanlike attitude of men who denied that they played crookedly; promised what they were unable to carry in the House; but dragged in a Bill which was passed by a large majority only to be sent to a Committee of the Whole House, and thrown out by a majority even larger than the majority by which it had been passed!

Tactics such as these are not applauded by the English. Why men who are versed in character reading, selection, and all the qualities which went to give them power, should be blind to matters which are patent to bystanders, is a subject which trenches on the mental atti-

tude of men trained to use language in just that manner which will best blind and win them the applause of their followers. No other argument applies.

But Alan Wassiter was not blind. He was endowed with vision and saw in the turmoil of the contending forces an advance towards that end for which he, and those who were with him, were working. 'The end justifies the means.' Always that axiom was in the forefront, rigorously kept there, but so adroitly hidden that it did not appear. Machiavellian? Of what else, in the long run, do politics consist? The seed sown by an Italian writer in the fifteenth century was bearing fruit even in the twentieth. And there were many who knew it but few of them vocal.

Now this last escapade of the Militants had brought Effie still more definitely into the limelight. It appeared that someone had seen her at the hotel on that night of rain and travail when the old church had been destroyed. She did not deny her presence. It seemed, indeed, that she courted arrest; but she remained free for reasons not far to seek at a time when martyrdom was the upshot of arrest and heroine worship the dignified and shattering end. Her name glowed in the accounts written detailing the scene. She was spoken of as a leader mainly responsible for it and her arrest was demanded. Yet nothing occurred to curtail her liberty. It appeared that she was sacrosanct, her deeds legitimate, when in all truth it may have been that no witness could be found willing to swear to her presence.

It is almost as difficult in affairs of this kind to obtain a witness, as it is in America to empanel a jury. But M'Grath amidst his worries in that far-off camp of sol-

diers, all seeking a way out of the imbroglio which faced them, found time to write imploring her to deny it.

He could not believe it.

There must be some mistake [he set down in the full plenitude of a faith which even now stood fast]. You would not willingly wound me or injure the cause by helping in so terrible an outrage. The Church of God has no part in the refusal of a Government to grant what you seek. It is not concerned with politics. It stands for the Faith and seeks to draw men closer to the Divine Presence; to prepare them for the end which, Heaven knows, moves ever nearer in these days of crass ignorance and organized hypocrisy. . . .

I am, as you know, a member of that Church; not a very worthy one; not one who conforms to all its ordinances; but it cuts me to the heart to think that your name should be openly linked with those who, in a mad rage with politicians, pass up and down the country smashing windows, and who apparently do not halt at such an enormity as this.

Effie, I am miserable here and these things conspire to add to my burden. I do not ask you to write and deny it. 'Sufficient be it that I do not believe and will not. I shall not harass you or burden you with words on the subject. I do not believe it. Dicky does not believe it; but we both are aware of the enemies you have made. Let it rest at that and pray for us, even as I pray for you . . .

I shall be in town shortly, in a month, perhaps less, and the sight of your dear face will be sufficient to enable me to carry on for a space when I return here. Always I want to be near you. Always I believe my presence may be of some small help to you — though it is torture to be near and to remember just what stands between us. I don't think you recognize quite what that means to me. It unmans me. I do not know what will be the upshot if you remain fixed in your resolve. Sometimes I think my only cure will be to cut adrift from my regiment and take service abroad. Yet I hate to do that, for whatever we may do or not do in Ireland — God rest her — I dare not be a slacker when 'the day' comes . . .

To be quite honest and bothersome, I am between the upper and the nether millstone, Effie, and you only can save me . . .

That letter reached Effie with others when she was in her place at Number 9, at the head of her Committee and all were busy with the details of a new excitement. Wassiter was the originator of it, but even his proffered aid was not proof against M'Grath's well-known superscription. Effie turned it over, tore it open, concluded her opening statement and began to read. She sat quietly in her place as Chairwoman of this meeting, read carefully, swiftly, almost as though the letter were on business, tucked it in her pocket when she had finished, and called on Mary Sladen to read the minutes.

She appeared quite calm; but her friend detected a change. She spoke presently; but her words were without verve, the words of one whose mind is preoccupied. Mary leaned nearer and said — 'Is anything wrong with the arrangements?'

'No.'

'Then what is it? Aren't you well?'

'Quite . . . But when it comes to the vote I shall go against it.'

'Against the — new plan?'

'Yes.'

'Because of that letter . . .'

'Yes.'

'Very well . . . want me to follow your lead?'

'Just as you choose, dear.' She smiled with the word, her eyes burning, her face ashen.

'If I do, it will be lost.'

Effie nodded.

'I don't think it will help us if we carry it. Do as you like.'

Mary Sladen acknowledged her freedom. For half an hour the matter was discussed, pro and con, and at the end of it a show of hands spoke against it.

'Alan Wassiter will be disappointed,' a voice proclaimed far down the table.

'I think,' said the Chairwoman in answer, 'Mr. Wassiter will be entertained.' And to Mary, sitting puzzled beside her, 'Well, that is decided. Now we mark time.'

'For how long?'

'A month,' said Effie, 'perhaps a little less.'

'May I know more, dear — or . . . ?'

'Yes. Come up with me to my room.'

They rose and went away, Mary's arm round Effie's waist, Effie's on Mary's shoulder.

The work of the Committee was done.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRUX OF IT

EFFIE'S room was scarcely what one would expect of one dedicated to sacrifice and busy smashing a road to chaos. It was too fine for the latter, too unromantic for the former. It was in fact nearly as severe as a man's; but tricked out in the splendid mauve which belongs to a woman of Effie's beautiful colouring. Orange cushions, an orange fender stool, and orange bands about the curtains were the only notes of contrast. For the rest the walls held tiers of books, the furniture was Sheraton, the whole tone mauve.

It showed, indeed, a choice and blend which proved her kinship with Harold who blossomed usually with orchids in harmony with his socks and tie.

Well — one cannot always be consistent. To be consistently banal, or consistently a fool may not be difficult, for neither make any great demand on the intelligence; but to be consistently a smasher of ideals and an artist during the same incarnation is less easy; for it predicates thought and thought predicates sensibility.

A door standing open beyond the fire showed a glimpse of Effie's bedroom and more artistry. She crossed after having pushed Mary into a seat amidst the cushions and closed it, then returned, found cigarettes, lighted and flung herself back in a chair which fronted the blaze.

'I'm tired of all this,' she said, without preface, her feet crossed at full stretch to the heat. 'Aren't you?'

'Sometimes I am, sometimes I'm not. It depends,' said Mary.

'Of course. But in your case, on what?'

'Oh, things in general. Why?'

'No use, my dear. Things in general don't apply. It's the things in particular that are so — yes, damnable. Surely you see that?'

'Naturally . . . but in this case — which?'

It was almost a repetition of Effie's question. The two might have been sparring, but they were not, nor did Effie appear to notice or to resent it. She smoked a moment in silence, then said —

'Supposing you had been brought up to consider certain facts in life horrible and degrading, and supposing you had acted all the time as though you *knew* they were horrible, and actually they *were* degrading . . . till, well, some day or other, you found yourself arguing mentally they could not be horrible, and hankering after them' — she leaned forward to examine and blow off the ash of her cigarette — 'really it amounts to that — and . . . well, what would you do?'

Mary seemed unable to reply. She required more definition. 'For instance,' she asked, 'what sort of facts?'

'Life,' said Effie. 'More particularly the things that affect women — like drink, or marriage; babies, illegitimacy . . . anything crucial.'

'I don't think,' Mary answered at once, 'that two of these things are horrible . . . Drink and illegitimacy, on the other hand, are, and I don't think I could make myself believe anything else. You can't group them together,' Mary decided, a quick series of puffs intermingled with the words.

'No — perhaps the grouping was wrong, but what of the other two — could you persuade yourself these were horrible?'

'No — I think not.'

'Then you believe in marriage?'

'I think that certain arguments we are making use of now, in order to obtain the vote, are arguments which we may discount when we have obtained it. That is one of them.'

'Then you would marry a man if he asked you?'

'Yes — if we had obtained the safeguards for which we are fighting.'

'Granted. But would you believe a man if he said he loved you?'

'I might.'

'Do you believe in love?'

'As a means of attraction — yes.'

'And you would marry a man who fell to it?'

'To attraction? I might — if I felt drawn towards him; not otherwise.'

'If . . . if . . . if . . .' Effie flung her cigarette into the fire and leaned forward elbows on knees, her two fists clenched and gathered beneath her chin. She looked like one crouching ready to pounce, as a wrestler, perhaps, or one entered for a race — and Mary recognized in her attitude the mood of this girl who was her friend in spite of that flung out 'If! If! If!' which seemed to scoff, but did not. She remembered, too, how not long ago the same mood had appeared when in the midst of a desperate encounter with hecklers their meeting had nearly been wrecked. Questions had poured from these people with the same machine-like accuracy as that now shown by Effie . . . questions which required thought, but must be answered out of hand. Well, luckily for the pair of them Mary had a very pretty wit, and a very big inkling as to why Effie leaned forward like Paula Tanqueray and raked her with questions.

'For instance,' Effie went on, 'how would you know if you could trust him?'

'I shouldn't know . . . in the sense in which you use the word.'

'Yet you would trust him?'

'Naturally — if I loved him.'

'Love! Love! Good God! That is the crux of the whole thing. What do you know of love?'

'Nothing.'

'Then what is love?'

'To a certain degree sex attraction, I suppose.'

'To what degree . . . how much of it is sex attraction and how much the divine afflatus?' Effie rapped out, her eyes like brown flames over flushed cheeks.

'Who can answer that? Surely you recognize that every man and woman is . . .'

'More or less a beast. Yes. That's definite, anyhow. You recognize it just as I do. Well — I suppose we may take that as proven seeing we once lived in a tree.'

'Ye-es — perhaps . . . but for millions and millions of years our ancestors have not lived in trees . . .'

'What of that? It persists. The taint persists.'

'Tails don't persist,' Mary cooed; 'at all events, with us.'

'Then you think that when we shed our tails we removed all trace of beastliness, sex attraction as you term it? Do you — do you, or do you not?'

Mary reached for the cigarette box, a silver trifle most beautifully chased and modelled, offered it and said — 'Smoke, there's a dear. You are overwrought and you mustn't let it go on or we shall have you worse than forcible feeding and in a nursing home, just when we most want you. Smoke, my child . . . smoke. It's fine for the nerves.'

'I'm not your child, and I won't smoke. It gives me a taste,' Effie slammed out, and in another moment was beside her friend, her face buried, her shoulders shaking.

'Don't mind what I say . . . I can't go on like this!' She lifted her face, dashed at her tears and flashed again. 'It's this damned sex attraction . . . and I loathe it . . . Remember that question we turned down at the meeting? Stupid, wasn't it? It would have kept me going . . . yet I voted against it because I had come under the influence of this sex attraction you speak of. I hate it. But it recurs every time in some way or another . . . and I can't explain it.'

She found calm slowly as she spoke. Her words gave the impression of an apologia. 'Listen! I must tell someone. It can't go on . . . I had a letter from Captain M'Grath this afternoon. That is why I acted as I did — and got you to help me. What can I do? I am not proof against myself even now that we are miles apart . . . Well — he is coming to Town presently, and . . . and . . .'

Again she hid her face, unable to continue.

Mary, with her arms round Effie's waist, her face flushed, very certainly her friend said after a little pause — 'May I know more, dear — or . . .'

'If it isn't clear — yes.'

'I suppose he wants to marry you?' Mary asked.

'Yes,' she nodded assent, then added swiftly, 'but I have refused. I will never marry.'

'Well — but if he loves you and you love him, what else remains?'

'I should be banned by the world, of course,' came crisply to resolve her doubts and flush her cheeks.

'I'm afraid you would — if you mean . . .'

 Mary suggested and halted uncertain how to go on.

Effie saw the context, the strained pause, and instantly it gave her the control which just now had escaped. She shivered and drew from her friend's embrace. The chill which crept through her as she heard that unfinished sentence seemed to indicate the stress which would be hers to live down — somehow, in the distant future. 'The Woman who did' — God! what a mess! The pause passed, and again she leaned forward staring into the red heart of the fire, her voice when she spoke, soft, round, mellow, and very steady. The flame gone.

'I suppose I am overwrought,' she said simply. 'Ready for sal-volatile or some other stupidity . . . I can't explain it in any other way. It is so hopelessly complicated — all of it. Marriage is the last straw. It is a ceremony in which I have no faith. Very few have . . . but the taboo of the mob forces us to accept it . . . and in any case we die disillusioned, bitter often, broken in thousands of cases, sorry for ourselves and hating the thing we call life . . .

'No — I shall not marry; but whether I follow the teaching of our intellectuals and risk the taboo, I am not prepared to decide.' She glanced at the clock silently ticking away the hours and stood up. 'Come. It is time to do something. I must do something or go mad. What have we on to-night?'

'Going to burn those ballot boxes, aren't we? The others have started . . . sure you feel fit to go?'

'Rather!' She crossed swiftly to her room and emerged dressed in a long grey cloak and hat while Mary was attending the fire.

'Come, then.' It was Effie who spoke, her voice calm, her eyes burning. 'It will do me good. Fighting is the only alternative. I like the notion, too. It will create a stir . . . is the car ready?'

‘Yes.’

‘Good!’ She passed on laughing. ‘If poor old C. B. were back again he would smile at the methods we are taking with his advice — “Go on pestering” — you remember? And the twinkle in his eyes when he said it?’

‘I should be sorry for myself if I had forgotten,’ Mary smiled as they passed with linked arms to the door.

Twin cats? Not at all. Intellectuals the pair, versed in the by-play of the schools.

CHAPTER VII

THE WRECKERS

THE month of which M'Grath had spoken was passed, and in the library at Number 9 a beautiful clock standing in a dim corner struck four muffled strokes. The chime with which in less strenuous days it heralded the vanishing hours had long been silenced, and now the hour itself was tolled on a dulled gong, funereal, deep, far away.

Daylight had faded early, aided by the smoke-canopy which hung over throbbing London, and already lamps shed their lustre on the table which stood out in the old way as an island amidst the gloom of that silent room.

Mary Sladen, Mrs. Massenshaw's secretary, sat in her place taking notes while her leader's silvery hair caught gleams beside her. The girl looked up swiftly as the notes caught her ear —

'Four o'clock already!' she said, 'I could not have believed it . . . and you, dear Mrs. Massenshaw, have had no rest . . . really we must put it aside.'

'Not at all. We must complete it,' came decisively from the elder of the twain. 'Why should I rest, child, while others work? We are cut off. Authority has deigned to attempt to stay my hand — but I do not choose to be stayed.'

'But you are tired.'

'Not a whit. A cup of tea will freshen me. It will be here in a moment . . . Come, look at this —'

She pointed to a map of the Surrey Hills which lay before her. 'We must issue new instructions or some

stupid hitch may occur. You have your shorthand notes? Well — this was set down for Thursday next, so our instructions must be duplicated and despatched before six o'clock; otherwise our people will not move.'

She proceeded to dictate. Little sentences escaped . . . 'The church is there — not far from Dorking . . . the meeting is to be at Newlands Corner . . . I remember perfectly . . . they will proceed at . . .' Lengthy and detailed instructions followed. What was to be done, where, the hour, means of transit — everything concerning a planned attack which had been arranged and was ready for despatch when 'the emissaries of a Government which was dead' appeared at the town office of the Cause, and carried off what they were able to save from the fire into which Mary Sladen had flung a whole sheaf of paper.

'You acted with splendid promptitude, my dear,' had been the Leader's comment when she learned of the disaster, 'and your reward will come. Meanwhile we have to reproduce those orders here. It can be done. I have memorized them.'

And now they sat late, intent on outwitting their enemies; Government, all who thought and acted in a way which was not theirs.

The table was littered with town and county maps and plans; with papers, time-tables, and all the trappings of an office whence movements and evolutions are ordered. It had the appearance of a business man's table rather than the table of folk engaged in soft dalliance with the poets. On three sides the room was fitted with bookshelves, while here and there rich bindings caught the light and shimmered microscopic lettering at the room.

The two women continued their work until a knock

sounded, then entered a maid carrying a tea-tray, cups, and an odour as of hot toast pervaded the room. Mrs. Massenshaw moved from her place and sat before the tray, her eyes tired —

‘At last,’ she said to the maid. ‘I began to fear you had forgotten us. No — you are not late. It is merely the fact that I am ready for it early. Thank you. Yes, we have all we require.’

Mary Sladen drew up beside the fire and sat too.

‘They have doubled our difficulties by this raid,’ she said, ‘and found a fine opportunity to crow over our lack of organizing power, as they call it; but we shall shine in spite of them.’ She took the cup Mrs. Massenshaw handed and leaned back, her eyes on her leader. ‘Still,’ she said, ‘I do wish you would leave all these details to us. We are ever so strong and fit. You do too much . . . It isn’t fair to yourself, or to us . . . now, is it?’

‘Dear child! I scarcely considered it from that point of view . . . Have you seen Iphigenia . . . will she be in for tea?’

‘I hardly expect her before six — why?’

‘It seems I wandered. Never mind. My health? Oh! don’t trouble about it. I am well . . . not quite so strong as I was; that is only natural though, at my age . . .’ She leaned forward, her eyes on the fire. ‘I admit I am tired — sometimes,’ she added inconsequently.

‘You are tired now, Madre.’

Mrs. Massenshaw sipped her tea —

‘Never until quite recently,’ she averred, ‘have I known what it is to be tired. I never felt the work. My heart was in it. It kept me burning . . . but since Captain M’Grath came into our lives — and Iphigenia seemed to favour him, I confess to a lapse . . . Work has become bur-

densome — things trouble me precisely as this loss of our itinerary troubles me now.'

'I have noticed that. I spoke of it just now; but you laughed at my fears.'

'No, no. Not quite that. I wished to go on. I wished to force myself . . . I did not mean to be unkind for I recognize your splendid devotion to myself — always, always, I recognize that . . .'

Mary Sladen came over and sat beside her leader — 'You are the Madre,' she said softly, 'and we love you. Won't you go to your room and leave this particular bother to me and the girls? We will have it in shape in no time. Do, dear Mrs. Massenshaw, go away and lie down.'

'Impossible, my child. When I rest I think of Iphigenia and the difficulties which are gathering about her. She is not the same. Even Lady Delany has noticed it. Have you?'

'To a certain extent — yes,' Mary prevaricated, taking her friend's hand and stroking it.

'And you think she is in love with him?' Mrs. Massenshaw pressed watching her.

'I scarcely know. I thought that . . .'

'Yes — go on.'

'I thought from what Effie said the other day there was no doubt about it.'

Mrs. Massenshaw drew back. She sat staring into the red glow of the fire, her lips firm. Then, turning sharply, she said — 'No! No! It has not come to that . . . pray God it never may.' She drew close and, placing her hands on Mary's shoulders, said desperately — 'Marriage would be the last straw. I could not bear it, child. It would kill me . . . No, no! I will not harbour the thought . . . She is winning him for the Cause . . . nothing more . . .'

Then, with swift incision, 'Did she tell you she loved him? Tell me. I would rather know — the — the suspense is terrible. What did she say?'

'I thought she rather implied it, Madre,' said the girl, frightened by the recollection of what Effie had said.

Mrs. Massenshaw rose and crossed to her place at the writing-table. 'Come!' she called. 'We will continue, please.'

For half an hour without pause the two went on with their work, dictating the one, writing the other, then the telephone bell rang and Mary Sladen took up the receiver.

'Hallo! Yes, this is Mrs. Massenshaw's — who is speaking . . . Captain M'Grath? Oh! Yes — of course . . . Now? . . . Very well, I will ask her if you will hold the line.' She turned to her friend and said quietly — 'It is Captain M'Grath asking if he may come round to see you. He wished to know, first, if Effie will be in.'

'To see me?' Mrs. Massenshaw showed perturbation in voice and expression. She said at once: 'Tell him to come. I refuse to remain in suspense . . . say, too, that Iphigenia will be here.'

Mary turned to the telephone with a sigh, spoke her message, added that they expected Effie at six o'clock, perhaps earlier, replaced the receiver, and heard Mrs. Massenshaw's grim rejoinder —

'Do you suppose he will wait an hour and a half, if, as you say, they are in love with each other?'

'I want you to rest,' the child reiterated. 'You are tired. Everything depends on you. Without you the Cause would fall to pieces — all our work and money would be lost. I can't believe Effie would deliberately act in a manner of which you disapprove. Do take more care of yourself, dear Madre, and let us do the work . . .'

'No — work is my life,' she said bitterly; then after a moment given to thought she added — 'You are more kind to me than I deserve, my child. Sit down again. I am not overdoing my strength. But I am worried — worried by this trial. Iphigenia is strong, and lately I have been tried by her attitude towards Captain M'Grath. I have sought to inculcate in my daughter that, as things are, a woman is handicapped by marriage. I supposed I had been successful; but now I am less sure. The thought troubles me. She knows how I suffered, the long agony of those early years of my married life which should have been joyous, peaceful, loving — beautiful. She knows, and so do you, how my husband slipped away from me, how I fought to bring him back, and, presently, would not at any price have taken him back. You may have heard, too, that at length I sought divorce, but could not obtain it. How I remained chained through long years, compelled to bear his name and the sneers of society because my husband was too clever and too rich to afford me the only chance a woman has of obtaining freedom . . .

'He was a favourite in whatever society he entered. I was a recluse, a woman who held views. He was not vicious, and he lived sometimes in America, sometimes in Africa, India — sometimes killed time with big game as a solace . . . He kept me tied — tied till I longed for death; came near taking my life, and would but for the beautiful comradeship of my dear daughter who stood beside me and helped me in this battle for the freedom of our sex . . .'

The noise of cheering and laughter filtered in as a door opened, and Mrs. Massenshaw sat listening, then, as it continued, she disregarded it —

'It is all very paltry . . . but the sum of most women's lives is no wider. I get tired of it all. The wheel comes

full circle more often than we imagine . . . and when I look into the future, having read the signs, I wonder whether it may not come full circle here . . . Enough of this.' She moved from the impassioned attitude she had adopted and put her arm about Mary's waist. 'I am making you miserable — and there is no need . . . Still, before we turn to other matters I should like you to know that when they raided our offices they got some mementoes of my struggle . . . It matters very little. Some day the world will understand why I am "bitter and insensate," as they say, in my hatred of mankind — that is all. I would have preferred to remain an enigma . . . one of those megalomaniacs, inarticulate and vicious, with which modern literature abounds . . . Come!' She approached the table, 'Iphigenia will be here soon, perhaps even Captain M'Grath . . . and there are the others. Listen! What has happened?'

Again there came the sound of cheering as through a half-opened door; but this time it did not cease.

'Government suppresses us in one place and we find another,' Mrs. Massenshaw commented, standing quite still. 'And we remain unbeaten.'

'We win, Madre! It is inconceivable that we should lose now!'

'If there were the smallest particle of honour in the men who try to rule us, matters would not have come to this pass . . . what *is* going on?'

'Harold is in his element to-day!' Mary Sladen exclaimed, listening also, wrapt. 'I believe they are coming in . . .'

'Dear boy!' Mrs. Massenshaw breathed. 'I pray he may develop more strength; he is young yet . . . very young.'

The library door opened with a clang and several members rushed in, Harold Massenshaw leading. He advanced quickly to his mother, crying out —

‘We simply must celebrate this, dear Madre. Mary! my apologies and salaams.’ He bowed, his hand on his heart, a very coxcomb in attitude. ‘Good! We made that entry top-hole! Now for the sing-song . . .’

He came quickly to the piano, a grand standing in splendid isolation halfway across the far end of the room, opened it and struck the first chords of the ‘Marseillaise.’ A number of women and girls had followed and now stood grouped about the piano. They commenced to sing in chorus —

‘Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé,
Contre nous de la tyrannie,
L’entendard sanglant est levé,
L’entendard sanglant est levé.
Entendez-vous dans nos compagnons
Mugir ces féroces soldats.
Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras,
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnies —
Aux armes, citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons!
Marchons! Marchons!
Qu’un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!’

Again, others flocking in, the war-song of France thrilled through that room, augmented by numbers, those in the corridor outside joining in —

‘Nous entrerons dans la carrière,
Quand nos ames n’y seront plus,
Nous y trouverons leur poussière,
En la trace de leur vertus!’

En la trace de leur vertu!
Bien moins jaloux de leur survivre,
Que de partager leur cercueil,
Nous aurons le sublime orgueil,
De les venger ou de les suivre —
Aux armes, citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons!
Marchons! Marchons!
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!

In the midst of this verse while Harold thumped out resonant chords, two women advanced from the door and pushed their way to the table . . .

'In here?' said the first.

'That's the ticket,' the second.

Then, said the first, leaning over Mary Sladen's shoulder and speaking in a deep, hoarse croak —

'I beg to report much smashing of glass in Oxford Street.'

'Windows?' Mary questioned as the cheers broke out again.

'Just that.'

'Whose?'

'Hay's the jeweller, halfway down from Marble Arch — and the adjoining shops.'

'Good! Good!' shouted the crowd who surged in the background near the door. 'But why not Jay-Jays?'

'Becawse we couldn't get there! That's w'y . . . Whole street lined wi' police and Beefeaters, like as if it's the Lord Mayor's Show!'

'Hurrah! Splendid!' came in chorus from the crowd.

'How did you smash them?' asked Mary Sladen, her eye on Mrs. Massenshaw.

'Wi' my little 'ammer,' said she who had wielded it.

She flourished it overhead, a weighty instrument of the kind known as a rivetter's hammer, and again cheers filled the room with sound.

Harold, a new idea leaping immediately launched upon the company the first bars of 'Who Killed Cock-Robin?' and, as silence fell, began to intone —

'Who killed that pane?
I, said Miss Spanner
With my little hammer,
I killed the pane . . .'

Then, amidst general laughter and a waving of implements, all joined in chorus. Mrs. Massenshaw leaned forward, her arms on the table, and Mary, hoping to check the noise, beckoned to the wrecker-member and asked — 'Expenses, please. Try to be quieter.'

'Seven an' elevenpence ha'penny.'

'I'll give you a chit. Cash it as you go out.'

The second wrecker advanced to the table while Harold led in some sphere far away the concluding stanzas of their war chant —

'Who digs his grave?
I, said the owl,
With my spade and trowel,
I'll dig his grave!'

'I beg to report,' said the wrecker while the singers drew breath, 'that w'ile me friend was escapin', a p'leece-man got a-hold of me an' tried to carry me off — X575 it was . . .'

'And you escaped?' Mary smiled. 'How?'

'Kicked 'is shins . . .'ad the right sort o' boots on for kickin' too . . .'

Laughter and cheers broke out again at this, and in the

midst of it Mrs. Massenshaw rose from her chair and left the room.

'Then I scratched 'is face,' said the wrecker. "'Ad me nails long a-puppus.'

'Expenses, please?' Mary Sladen asked, her voice strained to pierce the din.

'Ten shillin' an' fourpence — most of it taxi-cabs . . . My! you should 'a' seen 'is fice!'

'Scored, eh?' Harold roared over his shoulder.

'Raver!'

'Well — here's your chit!' Mary pressed the paper into the woman's hand; 'cash it as you go out. Try to make less noise in the passages. I'm afraid Mrs. Massenshaw is not very well.'

And there came from the piano group a final apostrophe to the tune of 'Cock-Robin' —

'Who winds his sheet?
I, said the Finch,
With an iron clinch
I'll wind his sheet . . .'

While the last chords rolled under Harold's hand, a servant opened a door at the far side of the room and announced —

'Captain M'Grath.'

She seemed astonished at the noise and crowd; but speedily retired. There were strange goings-on in the house. She did not know why.

Mary Sladen, seeing him enter, rose and at once crossed to meet him, her hands lifted playfully to her ears — 'What can you think of us?' she asked, her voice raised. 'It is awfully sweet of you to come . . . We've had a raid, you know, and this is the result.'

'Out of hand a bit, eh? Mrs. Massenshaw all right; no one hurt, I hope?'

'No, no. But they have our papers and a guard is stationed over the offices. So we are here . . . It's rather noisy.'

'Never mind that. How's Effie?'

'Jolly as ever. I'm glad you came in spite of the noise. It's like a breath of Hurlingham to see you. A coach went by an hour or so ago. It made me just ache for the drags.'

'Not much Hurlingham for us these days, Miss Sladen. We are up to our cruppers in work and are likely to be . . .'

'Oh — why?'

'International situation plus oddments,' he tossed back, careless of mien.

'Really! I was under the impression that was one of the things they *had* cured . . .'

'They couldn't cure haddock. They are just busy making tin-gods of the trades-union leaders . . . sorry . . . er . . . what in the world have you got on?'

'Nothing! Just waiting for Effie!'

'Thank Heaven! Thought I heard a — sing-song as I came in. Er — don't let me stop the fun . . . Jove! it may be my last chance. Think Effie will be late?'

'No. She has been away on a raid, you know . . . so of course' — she shrugged out — 'we can never be sure.'

'More hammering, Miss Sladen?'

'I'm afraid so.'

Harold by this time had discovered the presence of a stranger figure in the room, and advanced through the dim light to greet him.

'A man!' he sang or rather hummed to a tune which was like a dirge — 'A man amidst us here! Who should

he be . . . ' saw M'Grath's rather stern face and carolled — 'Oh! my aunt — if this isn't the limit! Member of the King's forces' — he pointed at M'Grath — 'member of the *sans-culotte*,' — he pointed to himself. 'Sir,' he struck an attitude, mauve socks in evidence, 'you take us at a disadvantage . . . You get us at the precise moment when we wish not to be got. I call it mean. Help me to slaughter him, Miss Sladen; and keep up our end, eh?'

Mary Sladen smiled and said — 'I think you are very well able to defend yourself,' as she returned to her seat at the table.

'You have your answer,' M'Grath said quietly. 'I confess I don't want to know too much of this side of your work. If it comes to trouble, I shall be up against you . . . and Effie, too, by George! Ghastly! Er . . . afraid I'm a bit out of my element here.' He swept the room with a glance and waited.

'Yes — there are rather a lot of petticoats about,' Harold bubbled.

'Eh? I didn't suppose they wore 'em, now,' said M'Grath.

'Bifurcated, my dear man . . . that's the whole difference. Seen my mother yet? She's somewhere about. I'll send and find her.'

He pressed a bell and a maid appeared — 'Please tell Mrs. Massenshaw that Captain M'Grath is here.'

The maid vanished smiling and Harold turned to his visitor. 'The Mater doesn't run a man in these days,' he laughed. 'Against the creed. Women, women everywhere and not a soul to love . . . my wigs, I get rather fed up with 'em.'

M'Grath had no words for this; he turned to watch the crowd and at that moment a new irruption of the wreckers

came in at the door and advanced to the table. A woman of the masses spoke —

‘If you please, Miss, I wish to report . . .’

‘Name, please?’ Mary Sladen asked.

‘Eva Bachelor.’

‘Thank you . . . Yes?’

‘I wish to report that me an’ Jane Standing has smashed four windows, broken off six knockers, rang twenty-seven bells; broken a window full of crockery in Adamses an’ got nicked as we were gettin’ to work on the Post-Office — Regent Street. But they couldn’t ’old us. Not them! An’ as we ’ad a taxi waitin’, we just nipped in an’ come to report before goin’ further . . .’

‘What windows did you break?’

‘Regent Circus, Mum.’

‘Not Swan and Edgar’s?’

‘No such luck. A bead shop an’ others near.’

‘Capital!’ She wrote as she spoke; ‘and the window full of crockery.’

‘Oxford Street, above Selfridge’s.’

‘How *did* you manage it? Not through the window?’

‘Not us! We went in to ast the price of a piece — a figure it were, an’ accidentally fell against a stand behind the window. Loaded it was in cupids an’ vases an’ things. It tottled right over . . . never heard such a clatter!’

‘Splendid! Splendid!’ chorused those who had congregated to listen.

‘They took our names an’ addresses,’ said the wrecker. ‘We was proper cut up, of course. Jane Standing cried . . . so did I. They seemed to believe it were an accident! Then we went on an’ got copped higher up, nigh Marble Arch, breakin’ windows. We fell up against ’em, quite natural . . .’

Again the shouts of laughter and 'Capital! Capital!' rang out, while Mary Sladen in even tones asked as she wrote — 'Expenses, please?'

'I leave it to you,' said the wrecker. 'The taxi alone is seven an' six.'

'The altogether, please?'

'Call it fifteen bob an' we're square.'

'Thank you. I will give you a chit.'

Harold crossed nearer the wrecker and asked amidst gusts of laughter — 'And what did you do when the police got hold of you?'

'Kicked an' scratched. My! you should 'a' seen Jane. When Jane gets to work wi' her nails, I'm sorry for the man. She's worse'n what I am . . . an' that's sayin' a lot.'

A voice from the doorway cried out brazenly — 'We'll show them what it is to use brute force' — a cultured voice, one from Mayfair which abuts on the Park and is beautifully swept and garnished against want.

Harold, not to be outdone, raised the question here — 'How can it be brute force when it is administered by a woman? Ha, ha, ha! What?'

Again the shouts rilled up, and Lady Delany, who had entered a few minutes since and now stood talking to M'Grath, asked — 'What *does* he say?'

'Something funny about brute force . . . 'pon my honour! I don't know. Must be funny, though, if you consider the result.'

'He *is* funny . . . too, too funny,' Lady Delany assured him. 'He is the life and soul of our Cause.'

'I should like to give him something to do. He seems a bit of a waster if you care for my view.'

'Harold a waster? Oh! dear no. He is one of the keenest at finding new schemes . . .'

'For women to carry out! You may be quite right, but we have a sort of prejudice against that type . . . and, oh, Lord! now he is going to yowl!'

The voices had risen again, clamouring about Harold for a song. 'Yes — yes — do sing it.' And he sat to sing —

'Midst acres of windows
With ham-mers I roam,
Seeking to break those
Quite far from my home . . .'

Lady Delany swayed approvingly. M'Grath sat glum, chewing his cropped moustache.

Harold continued to unfold, to the tune of 'Home, Sweet Home,' the work of a wrecker, and in the midst of the fourth stanza Effie came flushed and sparkling in at the door. The voices of those present were raised in a shout of welcome as she advanced to the table. She waved her hand to Lady Delany, caught M'Grath's eye, and reached the table as others had done before her. Harold leaped from the piano, exclaiming — 'Six o'clock! Can't stop to hear, Effie . . . Sorry. I'm due to speak.'

No one noticed him. All eyes were on Effie as she stood there panting. 'I beg to report! Let me get breath. Oh! I am so hot!'

Mrs. Massenshaw, who had entered just behind her daughter, edged nearer and said — 'My dear! Do take breath! You should not rush and get overheated.'

'Can't wait!' Effie laughed. 'Oh! I've had such a time! Wonderful! I got Number One between the eyes. You never saw such a look as he gave me! Hat off, glasses flying, coat-tails everywhere . . .'

The room rose to her with one cry — 'Splendid! Splen-

did!' Then in varying tones, 'Hurrah! Three cheers! How did you get him?'

M'Grath pressed through the throng and touched fingers in the approved style — 'Jolly glad to see you safe. I had qualms . . . been waiting an age.'

'A man's prerogative, dear boy!' she smiled back at him.

'I know. I know — but how *did* you get him?'

'Motored until he came up the street. Changed hats and motors every time I went up . . . Oh! not in this kit . . . they don't allow women in Downing Street these days.'

She opened her ulster and showed her masculine attire. M'Grath whistled softly as he took it in. His face clouded — 'Well?' she said. 'We have to do something to get near these Lords of ours . . .'

'So it seems. Sorry — don't mind me.'

'I mind nothing,' she told him, her colour leaping, 'be sure of that. I would go as a snake if I thought crawling would help me. I would go as a houri if I thought I could make them trip . . . sleek, contemptible shavelings without manhood or honour or . . . Oh! I am so hot . . . somebody get me some tea . . . take it down, there's a dear, good soul!' She bent over Mary patting her shoulder as she gave the details.

And then, while M'Grath stood biting his lips, amazed at the change he saw, Mrs. Massenshaw gave the signal and members made their way from the room while their leader approached M'Grath.

'I am afraid,' she said evenly, 'you have caught us at an unfortunate moment, Captain M'Grath. You will be puzzled to understand so much elation . . .'

'Revolt,' he answered steadily, 'is not easily conducted

without it. It is my own fault. I found it impossible to wait longer.'

'You see they raided our offices last night,' she explained, refusing to aid him, 'and I had to make this house our headquarters for a time. They have captured my papers. It means a tremendous effort; but our organization proved efficient and the work goes on.'

'I know something of organization, Mrs. Massenshaw, and don't pretend to envy you.'

'You might help us in our difficulties,' she smiled back.

'That is not possible while . . . er . . . I continue to hold His Majesty's commission,' he replied.

'Why don't you send in your papers?'

'If they ask me to fight Ulster, Mrs. Massenshaw, I shall do so. The Nationalists are arming, so is Ulster. It will end in trouble . . . thousands will refuse to fight if it comes to that. I am an Antrim man and they have twisted us up in knots — mind, I am throwing myself and my career on your mercy; because it only seems fair that I should do so, seeing I am here to ask your permission to speak . . .'

'I understand the consideration you have in mind,' she said, glancing round and placing one hand on his arm. 'It is good of you to put it plainly and I shall respect your confidence. But what an ordeal we face! Nothing less than civil war — if they push as I believe they will. Have you thought of what that means to us — to all of us?'

'I think of little else, dear lady. Night and day the thing confronts me, and all of us at the Curragh. I am troubled. I am in revolt now as surely as you are yourselves, and scarcely dare think of where we are all drifting. "Wait and see" has done its work. I know that; but what can I do? All my people are Ulster folk. I can't

march through my country with fire and sword at the ordering of a handful of politicians who mouth eternally of peace and drive headlong for the ghastliest kind of war. Brother against brother, by Jove,' he rapped out bitterly, 'father against son. The sort of horror we read of and shiver over and push from our minds. No — I refuse to do that. I shall get out of the Army if it is ordered — for, you see, I couldn't join the other side, for there I should be up against my pals . . . men who stuck it out with me in South Africa and have trained with me since. Gad! It's a pretty damnable sort of hole we are all in; but for me, I think there is but one solution. Out of the country — somewhere where a man can breathe without interference; forget the dear old regiment and tackle the land.' He stopped suddenly, his eyes on Effie and Mary Sladen standing to look back at him from the balcony. 'Sorry!' he faced Mrs. Massenshaw again, 'I seem to have been gassing pretty badly . . . letting go . . . perhaps worrying you.'

'Not a word, I beg. I appreciate very highly the trust you have given so freely . . . and if I thought I could aid you in any way, I would do so gladly.'

He glanced at her, a flicker of anxiety in his mind — 'You can,' he said as a man does when he feels he is within touch of the burning question. 'You see I am not tied to the Service. I love it — that is all. I can get out or stay in; go to France, Italy, India — anywhere as far as means go . . . but I cannot leave the country without asking your permission to speak to Effie . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw checked him at once — 'Must we talk of that?' she asked, a new *motif* in the air.

'I shall have no peace until I do,' he answered, his voice softened.

'And I,' she told him, 'very little afterwards. No, no — don't mistake me. This is a matter over which I pretend to no control. Iphigenia is of age. She must act as she thinks fit.'

'I hoped to persuade you to help me, Mrs. Massenshaw.'

'Impossible. To be quite honest, I would rather follow her to her grave than see her married.'

'To me in particular,' he asked, 'or as a general proposition?'

'I abominate marriage. Marriage is a curse, Captain M'Grath.'

'I can imagine a greater,' he said with the impetuosity of his country. 'Still — I venture to hope you will not veto my desire to see Effie, and ask her.'

'No — I could hardly ensure that. It is a matter that concerns Iphigenia. I confess I am sorry to know that my surmise, for I had my doubts, you see, has proved true. I hoped for long that you really came to see us because you sympathized with our Cause . . . but I was wrong. It accounts for much that has puzzled me of late. Yes — see her, see her now.'

'Thank you.'

He paused questioning how he could draw Effie from her companion. The two still remained on the balcony looking down upon the gardens, chatting and recounting, no doubt, the onslaught Effie had made on Number One — the Great Man of England who bid folk wait and see.

'Can you help me?' He turned again to Mrs. Massenshaw, his eyes bright with hope. 'I can't very well get rid of Miss Sladen . . . and I couldn't wait through another day of uncertainty now I have gained your permission to speak.'

'I agree. Uncertainty is misery *in excelsis*. I have proved that — long, long I have proved it. I will call her. We can get to our work and leave you the field.'

Even in giving this concession there was a harsh note in Mrs. Massenshaw's voice. A note which seemed to waver between hope and fear of this man who might capture the girl and tame her as women always were tamed. Yet she stepped nearer the window and called —

'Mary!' as a gramophone began to blare 'Rule, Britannia!' somewhere near at hand.

Then, as the girl turned about — 'I wonder whether you can help me now with those plans we were talking of? It will be necessary to get them formulated to-night.'

'At once if you wish it — and are not tired.'

The two girls came in from the balcony, drawing nearer arm in arm. 'That is sweet of you. I think, too, dear, it would be well to rest at the same time. If I lie down and dictate, we shall kill two birds with one stone.' She turned, smiling in spite of trembling limbs, to Effie. 'And you, dear, must entertain Captain M'Grath until Harold returns. The Irish imbroglio is worrying him. Perhaps you may be able to show him where his duty lies.'

M'Grath drew near, and, as the two passed from the room, pointed towards the open window and said — 'Do you mind if I shut out that din?'

'Stifle "Rule, Britannia"! ' Effie exclaimed. 'Horrible notion! Why, I thought we both loved it. Please don't — and do sit down!'

They took chairs and sat *vis-à-vis* — 'And you do your best to smash it!' he laughed. 'Queer phase, isn't it?'

'Not at all. The natural clamour of youth to be heard . . . and, if what my mother said is not all what Jimmy Haines calls eyewash, you and the boys at the Curragh

will make it still more difficult for Britannia to rule. I am glad. I rebel at the mere notion of being ruled by flappers. Why should we be ruled by anyone? We aren't Germans to be tucked in bed and *verboden* at every street corner. We are free and intend to get more freedom.'

'On my soul,' M'Grath groaned, aware she was laughing, 'I think we are going the way to become slaves.'

'Nonsense, Paddy. All our tenets aim at freedom . . . the Labour Movement. The Nationalists, ours . . .'

'On the contrary,' he warned her, 'all are moving to aid the German menace.'

'A chimera!' she laughed openly.

'A reality, dear lady, that is very near. One that keeps me on thorns. But, waiving that, I am fed-up with all this squabbling and decadence. I shall get out of the Army . . . get somewhere where I can look my fellows in the face and feel honest again. I am not honest now. I am in revolt precisely as you are, against Authority — such as it is — and I mean to make an end of it.'

She leaned towards him, her eyes bright with hope. 'Then you will come over to us entirely — and help as you desired?'

'Afraid I can't promise that — until I know more. It all depends, you see, on whether you can help me . . . I have lots of tin — too much if all one hears is true. Perhaps. But it is mine, handed on to me by my fathers who fought and died for their country — and I intend to keep it. I intend, if you will be good, and help me, to use it fairly . . . but if you cannot help me, then, God knows what I shall do . . . for you see I must spend it somehow. I can't hoard . . .'

He looked at her, leaned nearer, his elbows on his knees. Effie smiled. She did not draw back.

'Not very heroic, is it?' he asked. 'I feel a cad. All this unrest goes to my heart and the knowledge that even greater peril is approaching makes me hesitate.'

'I fail to see the link; but for the sake of argument, what do you suppose *we* shall do if it comes?'

'The British? Back out of it if the politicians have their way, as we did in '70. It is inevitable. The Pacifists rule us. Their theories have taken the crowd by storm. Why should there be war? Why can't a conference settle any silly dispute that may arise — settle it at once? We are tied to a bickering mania that kills thought and makes preparation a crime. This country is seething with discontent. France is as bad. While Germany is busy smashing France, unless all the portents are awry, *we* shall be busy smashing Ulster, or the Nationalists; settling strikes and labour troubles. Consider it all! Remember the incendiary speeches made by men who know exactly what happens if you pour petrol on a fire . . . the Class against Class talk. God! there is no *kudos* in fighting this kind of thing. It is all mean, contemptible, squalid . . . Then consider this squabble of yours with mankind. Doesn't it add to the sum total of discontent — doesn't it provide the very opportunity for which Germany is waiting and of which Lord Roberts tells us in the plainest terms?

'Forgive me if I hurt you. I must speak — because, you see, in all these cases of jumbled doctrines and antagonism, it is the Army and Navy that suffer eventually. We shall be called in to clear up the mess. We shall stand, as before, to face whatever is flung — bottles, mud; using blank and the flat of our swords . . . and in the by and by stand in the dock to take our trial for any little shooting which may have killed off a man or a dozen of

our enemies . . . That is how I see it — and to be quite candid I did not join the Army for that.' He rose and came close to her, standing with outstretched hands. 'That is how I see it, Effie. What am I going to do? There is going to be very big trouble — and, if you can't help me, I shall get over to France and join the Foreign Legion. I am a soldier, not a policeman. If I have to use the sword, I must use its edge, not the flat . . . Come and help me, dear heart. No one else can. I am at the parting of the ways . . . ready to beg, ready to wait if you order me to wait . . . ready to cross out the "obey," if you desire it . . . Come! What am I to do?'

He reiterated the phrase with pathetic insistence, and the girl, sitting dreamily in her chair, her eyes raised to his, smiled evenly —

'But you know my views, Paddy . . . you know everything . . . and how is it possible? Besides, I thought we were to remain pals, my friend — nothing more.'

'Surely it is possible to remain pals even if we are married?' he objected.

'Impossible. It never happened that way out of books — the mushy sort, or plays — made for the million. After marriage comes tragedy for the woman. It is not woman who is inconstant often, but man. I do not blame him. It is Nature. Imagine me tied to you in marriage, and you, by and by, of course, finding you no longer considered me beautiful or my thoughts fine . . . while in the background there lurked one who held you tied.' She rose and stood with her hand on his shoulder, quietly pleading as she would at one of her meetings. 'No, no — we have talked of this already and agreed to banish it. To marry you would be against all my theories and teaching. How, if I marry, can I continue to speak as I have of

marriage? Marriage with you or any man would kill my work, and my work, you remember, is life to me; bread, drink, hope . . . Don't you see that I should feel tied at once and be restive at once? You would be tied also — but not so fast. Man-made laws have seen to that. You would feel the curb, though . . . Suppose I refused to do just what you wished at any given time . . . then imagine the stress between us. Ghastly! I would rather die than risk that torture — for I love you, Paddy, now and for ever . . . No! that is not appeal — it is fact. It is your due. If I married, which is inconceivable, you are my choice . . . for I think I can read you for a bit of the way. But I shall not marry you.' She reached out and took his hands, both of them in her own, and looked up with quivering lips. 'Paddy, dear friend — you and I are up against the worn old shibboleths and I think neither of us is likely to give way. We are tied equally by environment and heredity . . . so, you see . . . I *can't* help you . . . although there is no other man in the world . . . I would help. Only you.'

Her head sank upon his shoulder, her eyes bright with tears —

'That is what kills me . . . drives me mad,' M'Grath urged, holding her, stroking her hair. 'Don't you see? You put the devil in my heart . . . you love me as I love you . . . but you will neither marry me nor trust me.'

'My mother trusted to love,' she whispered, seeking release. 'Ask her with what result.'

'That is no argument.'

'I do not argue. I state facts, Paddy.'

'What can I do to prove my sincerity?' he asked, his lips near her brow.

'Nothing, dear . . . only let me go.'

He obeyed at once, cut to the heart — 'I beg your pardon — er — I forgot. Jove! You would make any man forget, and — er — I suppose you recognize you are putting me out of action?'

'I do not. I should hate to think of it. Am I not your pal? Please! Please — Oh! I refuse altogether to believe you are weak enough to be thrown so easily.'

He faced her grimly, red, satirical — 'Ha! Ha! Ha! Funny that! Weak, eh? On my soul it did not strike me from that angle . . . Difference of the sexes, I suppose. Well, well . . . so this is the end, then . . . the last, last ditch?'

'You have your work,' she answered swiftly, nettled, perhaps, at his tone, 'I have mine. It should make no difference to either of us. Surely because you are a man and I am a woman it is possible to meet and talk without for ever dragging in this eternal question of marriage. It seems so futile — so childish. It is surrender to sex; surrender to passion, if you like, and I shake my head in refusal. Come and see me on Thursday. I can't lose your friendship. I am speaking in Bedford to-morrow night, returning after the meeting — will you come?'

'Will you reconsider your answer in the interval?' he asked, swayed at length by her appeal.

She laughed outright. 'My answer? No, no. That is final, final, final!'

'Then this must be final, finalissimus, my dear . . . so I'll just find my hat and get away home.'

'Not in anger, though, please . . . I could not bear that.'

'Faith!' said M'Grath, 'I have small knowledge of hair-splitting . . . call it self-defence.'

He turned towards the door and Effie accompanied him. She held out her hand —

'I am sure,' she said, with the air rather of one who gives away the whole secret, 'that you will acknowledge presently that I have acted wisely. Good-night, then . . . and if ever you want a chat, or think I can help you, call and I will come.'

He faced about at that —

'On Thursday I shall be leaving Town,' he gave her in return. 'If you wish to help me, you must be speedy. Good-night.'

Effie reëntered the library, switched quite calmly some of the lights off, and sat before the writing-table. She took up a letter, read it slowly, tore it and dropped the pieces into a waste-paper basket already overfull. All her actions were quiet and precise. She sat after she had done this looking into the shadows which she had made more dark on reëntering the room.

CHAPTER VIII

M'GRATH DECIDES

AT his rooms in Piccadilly, M'Grath sat frowning before the fire, his legs outstretched, a cigarette in a long amber holder between his lips. He appeared comfortable, quite at his ease, but the knitted brow told another story.

The room was beautifully furnished, silver on a Sheraton sideboard, on the breakfast table behind him; across a corner a baby grand, polished, delightful to the eye; etchings above it, etchings on all the walls and on the mantel above the fire, blue china of the willow pattern: Delft, and a clock of wonderful Dutch marqueterie.

It was the room of a connoisseur who could afford to indulge his sense of the beautiful; a room to wander in, picking out the exquisite works of the masters. Yet M'Grath could scarcely be termed happy, judging by that set frown. Nor was he at ease. He smoked; but his feet were not still on the fender stool; they moved continually, sometimes appeared to beat time with the twitch of an overwrought musician.

Suddenly he picked up the *Times* which lay on the rug beside him; turned the pages, slapped them straight and scanned the headlines. 'The Ulster Question.' 'Movements of Cabinet Ministers...The North solid... Monster Meetings in Armagh and Belfast...'

'Damn!'

The word scarcely sounded, yet it was there lying on the man's lips, in his eyes, adding to the frown. He turned a page and read, again from the headlines — 'The

Chancellor's Speech in the Reichstag . . . Friendliness for England . . .' while words spluttered his comment — 'Eigh! Eigh! Good Lord!'

Then he threw down the paper, leaned back in his chair, and looked at his cigarette. It had gone out. He knocked it from the holder and rose to pace the room. Once or twice the words escaped him again, 'Good Lord!' twisted, sardonic, more like a curse than a prayer.

He walked round looking at his pictures, at the side-board with its load of Georgian and Queen Anne silver. A shrug appeared. The things bored him. He had no use for them. Soon they would go to auction — doubtless someone would buy them. He seemed to muse over this, then returned to the fire, found his pipe, loaded and lighted it, and again reached his chair. He sat down nursing one knee with clasped hands; the foot jerked to and fro — like the tail of a cat when disturbed before a fire.

On the rug was a letter which he had read. He picked it up, re-read it, folded it, placed it in his pocket; all his movements with this letter were quiet and restrained. He seemed to caress it with his fingers. He glanced at his wrist-watch — 'Eleven o'clock!' he said. 'What in the world am I to do?' Then he leaned sideways and took up the *Times* once more.

A note at the head of a column of advertisements caught his eye and he read — aloud; perhaps because he was tired of silence; perhaps because — well, it had caught his eye:

'Give us a book that flowers and flames
With love and youth and noble tears.'

'Good Lord!' again came the phrase exclamatory, 'that's

the mushy sort she spoke of last night! Ye gods! Where do they grow 'em?' And read to see —

‘Oh! take away those books that tell
The hideous so-called truth of things,
Those little documents of Hell —
Bring us the book that dreams and sings
And whispers “All is well!”’

With a sudden flick of anger the paper was in the fire. He watched it burn chanting — ‘Mush — Musher — Mushibus — pluperfect damned mush. The stuff the British Nation swallows . . . asks for and gets: “since when they have read no other.”’

Once more he rose, struck a match, and walked moodily about the room, muttering . . . ‘I shouldn’t care a brazen joss if I thought they knew it when they get it . . . but they don’t . . . Think of those children last night . . . Jove! “For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!” Heigho! Getting what Wilson calls relegious . . . Poor Wilson! Gad! If we are drawn in, Wilson and the rest of us are goners . . . “The Expeditionary Force” they call us in the House! That is the Force which will be Expeditiously wiped out . . . One hundred and fifty thou’ to uphold the honour of our sanctified mush-swallowers as per treaty . . . if . . .’

A knock fell upon the door and Captain M’Grath’s man entered to announce — ‘Major Farningham, sir.’

M’Grath moved swiftly to greet him with outstretched hand —

‘Dick, old man! This is delightful — come over to the fire.’ He armed him thither, surprise in every line. ‘I thought you were at the Curragh. I wanted you . . . was babbly for want of a word.’

‘I’m crossing back to-night. What are *you* doing?’ Farningham asked.

'Sending in my papers.'

'Rot!'

'Fact!'

Farningham moved from the fire and captured his friend's wrist — 'Hum!' he said. 'A bit flabby. Where did you dine last night? I rang you up. Got no answer . . . stick out your tongue.'

'Not a bit. I'm as fit as they make 'em — bored stiff, though. Dined as you call it with my sister and her two flappers. Nice kids. Had musical-chairs for dessert.'

'No wonder you are off colour.' Farningham resumed his place, back to the fire. 'Seen the paper?'

'Rather. Read a squib about books. By Jove! Ends like this —

"Bring us the book that dreams and sings,
And whispers 'All is well' . . ."

Circa 1914 . . . Smoke?' He offered his cigarette-case.

'Thanks. I'll turn on a pipe.'

M'Grath lounged back in his chair blinking through clouds of smoke.

'Those infernal tobacco companies,' said Farningham, 'are ruining the men's health; making them dyspeptic — lung-clogged . . . and we, in our cow-like manner, are making millionaires of the chaps who sell 'em. Give me honest tobacco — but cigarettes —' he puffed luxuriously at his pipe —

'Well, why not?' M'Grath tossed back. 'Doesn't Tommy insist on cigarettes with a kick, and refuse all others?' he chanted brazenly, very much at his ease —

"Once, a month ago to-day,
I pinched a cig,
An' did a jig!

Gawd's trewth I did,
Ho, yus! no, kid,
An' then I smoked it grey . . ."

You know the rest. So does Tommy . . . So do our lords and masters by God's grace assembled to push us into the ditch. Major! I'm sick. What is in the paper?'

'The C.O. is coming over to answer for his sins — and mine.'

'The devil he is!'

'There was a row in the House a few nights ago. Parliament on its hind legs — the gingering end of it,' Farningham explained suavely, 'demanding to know whether the law is to be supreme or the soldier. And as the bulk of 'em are lawyers, you can lay odds the soldier will have to take a back seat. That means resignations right and left with us, while Tommy and the N.C.O.'s will be left to square things with the mob.' He continued to smoke placidly, his hands behind him. 'A bit of a pastoral — isn't it? — viewed how you will and from where you will. A Claude with a smoky effect working round from the right . . . blurred as yet, but presently to blot out the whole landscape . . . I wonder whether we have *any big men anywhere?* If we have they don't seem to show up . . . Look here, though — you don't mean me to understand you *have* sent in your papers?'

'Just that,' said M'Grath, but without enthusiasm.

'Going out when the wine is coming round? It can't be done.'

'I can't fight my pals in the Army. What is left but resignation?'

'Nothing — if you go on the Ulster theory.'

'Ulster is my life-blood. I can think of nothing else. How can I avoid it?'

'By sticking on!' Farningham withdrew his pipe and waved it, pointing out facts. 'Oh! there's something bigger than Ulster in the air. Something so big that it will take us by the throat, you and me and all our boys, joggle us into new packs; start us with new cries, new labels, by George, and new knapsacks to carry 'em in!' He waved with the pipe-stem. 'You and I will have to overhaul our kit, dear boy; discard luxuries, fopperies, homes . . . chuck cricket bats and polo sticks and get to work leading men. And we'll have to pretend it's easy as shelling peas . . . that we are quite ready . . . aching to be "up and at 'em," in the beautiful, placid, British way . . .'

M'Grath, looking up, watching, smoking, quite at his ease asked — 'Germany?'

'Without a doubt. They haven't forgiven us for Agadir . . . never will.'

The two smoked in silence, M'Grath's eyes on his toes, Farningham's on the sideboard with its load of old silver. 'What are you going to do with this little lot?' was his question, and again the pipe-stem dotted the *i*'s for his friend.

'Auction,' he said briefly.

'Better be done soon — before the City gets wind of what's coming. There will be a slump.'

M'Grath, still examining the toes of his shoes, said —

'Yes.' Then, quite casually, 'I sometimes wonder if we aren't playing for it . . . but before that comes we shall be up to our necks with Ulster — or resigned.'

'Wrong, Patrick, my son. The Irishmen will be out-trumped.'

'I'm not a prophet, Dicky . . . and I've sent in my papers.' His eyes never lifted to his friend as he said it.

'Then you must recall them . . . cancel your letters . . .

go round to the War Office and get hold of them before they act.'

'Afraid I can't do that, old chap. It would mark me for all time.'

Farningham moved uneasily before the fire. He struck several matches and relighted his pipe — 'By George! It's chilly. Sweet weather! What is it, January or June? Oh, well . . . I suppose that does rather clinch it. Sorry. Why did you act without consulting me . . . What is behind it all . . . not the Massenshaw filly, by chance?'

'Have the goodness to remember that Miss Massenshaw is my friend,' M'Grath flared instantly, his eyes lifted with the words.

'Sorry! I was forgetting that in the knowledge that she is my cousin — and I'm not proud of her . . . is it?'

'In a sense, yes,' M'Grath answered, and again his eyes fell.

'Thought so. No man ever makes an ass of himself but what a woman provides the ears. Why on earth didn't you consult me?' He moved up and down the rug fuming for the first time. 'I tell you there is the chance of a lifetime coming for you and me. You won't be captain a week after the curtain is rung up. You will get your step and I shall get mine. We shall stick on gorget patches and streak away to glory on the Staff . . . No — not in Ulster . . . in France, please God, side by side with our allies and doing our level best to down the "shining armour."'

M'Grath assimilated this and found it tasteless. 'How you harp on that!' he exclaimed. 'I've been talking with the financiers and they say there will be no war . . . No — Ulster is the biggest thing I see and it finishes me. There is no sign of the "real thing."'

'No sign! Straws, my friend — straws everywhere.

Number one' — he ticked off his points — 'Kiel is through. Number two, England is very busy fighting England, plus the various sects and consciences. Number three, France has pushed through her three years' service scheme in spite of labour opposition. And there are more definite signs. Remember Agadir — which the Teuton will never forgive. We slapped his face there. A "proud nation,"' he quoted, "'draws the sword when it is struck.'" It does not talk. It waits its chance. Remember the latest sword-rattling — Zabern! Germany hit at France there, but France refused to see; kept on with her squabbles; busy as we are in making tin-gods of the working-man. Bernhardi you have read; Treitschke and his works you have touched as I have . . . but put all that aside and remember Lord Salisbury's warning, given in 1900; the "War Lord's" telegram to Kruger, the "mailed fist" and "shining armour" for years flung cynically in Europe's face; the Crown Prince's damning shout before his father, "I want to have a slap at France" . . . and the genial toast, "Der Tag!" . . .

'Nothing in all this? What can it mean but war — war when Germany is ready and the rest of the world in hotch-potch over squabbles that leave me cold. Germany demands a place in the sun — England apparently keeps her in the shade, and England is decadent' — the words tumbled out with scathing satire. 'England is quite unworthy the Empire she stole while Germany, poor thing, was wrestling with the Athanasian Creed, teaching her people to read the Bible and beginning to tuck them in their bed o' nights . . . Nothing in all this? England is cowardly, casual, cynically indifferent to her stolen lands. The Dominions are sick of her . . . her attitude is an offence alike to Germany and to her own people. Therefore

France, who is our ally, is to be knocked out; Russia will be too slow to aid her; England will look the other way and will be quite ready to be squared. She will stand by and let France bleed as she did in '70, by George! Then our turn will come. We shall be friendless, Europe weak and hating us . . . easy game for the Teuton — that is how they figure it at Potsdam . . . but the point remains — *shall we do as Germany predicts* or take up the gage and strike? Who knows — no soul of us all — not even the politicians who mark time while we soldiers starve. Not a soul . . . But I believe — aye, by the Lord! I believe England will strike.'

He paused in his march and looked down at his friend. And M'Grath questioned, 'Well — and what then?' as though the matter scarcely affected him, as though the words had not thrilled or made him writhe.

'Then? Allah alone can tell. It is written,' said the quieter voice of Major Farningham. 'There will be blood and suffering and orders and promotion for many of us — and some will sleep longer than they intend . . . That, too, is written. It is a thick book, M'Grath, and it is printed in red . . . going to stick to your theory about Ulster? Going to permit a woman — one of the rebel gang that is doing its best to kill order — put you out of your stride? Going to let spleen stand between you and the old regiment's honour? I refuse to swallow it . . .'

Still M'Grath made no sign. He sat like one stung by the immense power of Fate, looking at his toes shining in the firelight.

Farningham accepted the signals. He knew he could safely leave this man, who was his pal, to fight the thing out alone. He glanced at his watch, said curtly, 'I must go,' and moved for his hat and cane. M'Grath rose to

accompany him. He might have spoken, but at that moment the door opened and his man entered to announce a visitor —

'Mr. Harold Massenshaw,' he said and withdrew.

The youth — he was not more — advanced in 'exquisite' attire; smooth, scented, curled, and smoking a cigarette held in a gold and amber mouthpiece.

'Hallo! you blighters! Caught you napping, eh? Effie not turned up?'

He advanced, very sure of himself, to Major Farningham, and dug facetiously with his cane. His cousin faced him, lifting slowly a monocle which he screwed in his right eye; he surveyed him up and down, down and up with meticulous care and in silence.

'Sorry. Somebody's funeral?' Harold asked in no way flustered and lifting the tortoise-shell eyeglass which dangled on a ribbon, in retaliation.

'Yes, sir. Your country's. Are you attending as mute or jester?' came in sternly clipped speech from the Major.

'Oh! Hang it . . . I say, you know, that's a bit thick, isn't it? M'Grath! What's come to this relative of mine? Been poisoning him with a *rechauffé* of our sing-song last night?'

'Looks like it,' M'Grath growled.

'If your mother had listened to me,' Farningham lashed out, 'you would have been a man to-day, not a gilded orchid-stand. You would have been in the Navy . . . busy, too, in a month's time, if I know the signs, instead of dancing about the country helping a damned crowd of women to break windows and burn churches.'

Harold stared. He stood with dropped glass — 'Oh! Hang it . . . I say, you know, that *is* a bit thick, isn't it?'

'If I had my way with Government,' Farningham whipped out, angry as M'Grath had never seen him, 'I would stop the sale of cocoa in this country.'

He turned on his heel, brushing his hat.

'May I ask why?' Harold questioned in spite of some qualms.

'Certainly. Because it seems to breed pacifists.'

'The sort of thing,' Harold shrugged out, incorrigible and looking across at M'Grath, 'one has to stand from one's relatives . . . I say, though, that is a bit thick!'

'I don't see you often,' Farningham said more evenly. 'You have the makings of a man or I wouldn't trouble to put you right. Drop this confounded foolery; get your sister into a strait-jacket and engage a drill sergeant. Get him to put the fear of God in your heart and the walk of a man into your patent-leather, cloth-topped, pearl-buttoned feet. Get him to put a rifle and bayonet in your fist and show you how to stick the sack . . . then perhaps you will be ready to face the business that, please God, is going to straighten out all the little kinks and whorls we have grown since last we sighted a gun.' He turned to M'Grath, brusque as ever. 'Sorry. He is your guest, not mine. I am going to the War Office and will look into that business we were speaking of. Remember, I cross to-night. Boat train — Euston — if you want me. So long!'

He opened the door, took no further notice of Harold, and stalked out. M'Grath turned back from seeing him away and found Harold sitting at his ease, his feet on the fender, a cigarette between his lips. He crossed the room and stood on the rug, his back to the fire, and Harold at once questioned in his most aggravating manner —

'I say . . . who's been falling over Dicky Farningham?'

'Seemed to me he made it pretty plain,' M'Grath gave

back, taking in his points, his attitude, the whole consummate ease he displayed.

'Yes — but what have I *done*?'

'I fancy it's what you haven't done, dear boy. Really it doesn't bear analysis.' He crossed to the sideboard and found whisky and seltzer. 'Do I understand you expected to meet your sister here?'

'Actually I was to meet her at Harrod's, and bring her . . . but she didn't turn up. I thought perhaps I had over-shot the time and came along on spec. Haven't you seen her?'

'No.'

Harold put up his eyeglass and lay back watching while M'Grath produced tumblers. 'I say,' he urged, 'you are awfully glum about something. Is it Effie . . . did you expect her?'

'I was uncertain what to expect. I had a note saying she fancied she would be passing down Piccadilly and would look in — if she did.'

'Funny way of putting it,' Harold commented, undismayed.

'Your sister is nothing if not original.'

'Ra-ther!'

M'Grath came back to the fire and took up his old position. He looked down at this boy lounging at his ease while he stood; noted his calm way of getting across the path of his elders, his crossed legs and negligent attitude; his twelve inches of clocked, purple socks visible on a vista of undergarments beyond; saw that he sucked at a cigarette and bent over his orchid from time to time and smiled as he did so.

'Give us the book that flowers and flames
With love and youth and noble tears,'

M'Grath quoted at random.

Harold twisted to face him —

‘Apropos?’ said he.

‘God knows. The Yellow Aster or the Pink ’Un probably . . . what razor do you use?’

‘Colleen Bawn. Nothing at all like ’em,’ said Harold, finger on chin.

‘Thought so. The latest thing in tortoise-shell and gold. Have a peg?’

‘Rather early, isn’t it? What says the Psalmist?’ He seemed to dig facetiously as just now he dug at his cousin.

‘Thought perhaps it might help to pull you together,’ M’Grath tossed back.

Harold sat rather more erect, if that can be said of one who lay on his back — ‘I say!’ he reiterated. ‘Aren’t you rather rubbing it in, too?’

‘Sorry. How goes the Cause?’ M’Grath crossed to the sideboard, mixed a peg, drank part of it, relighted his pipe, appeared to listen to Harold as he waxed eloquent once more.

‘Strong!’ said the boy. He flourished his cigarette to prove it and the cigarette, acknowledging the law of centrifugal force, fell on the rug, and continued to burn without shame. M’Grath saw this presently and put his foot on it; Harold found another.

‘Strong!’ he said once more. ‘We got into the House last night and gave them all a devil of a flutter; seemed to expect bombs. Six of our chaps were lagged. I’m going round to bail ’em out presently.’

‘Chaps!’ M’Grath repeated, sarcasm on his tongue.

‘Synonym for girls. They like it,’ said Harold as he lighted his cigarette.

M’Grath had it in mind to take this lad by the shoulders and shake life into him; shake other things as well;

but he refrained, smoking like a chimney. Was he not Effie's brother, a sort of pet among them all?

Harold noted the silence, yet resumed quite *au fait* in attitude and voice — 'Oh, by the way, did the Mater tell you of the new game last night?'

'I heard of several. Which do you refer to?' M'Grath asked. He took up his glass and finished the peg; polite as men usually are when they are within an ace of lifting the boot.

"'The Lost Truth,'" said Harold.

'Never heard of it.'

'Oh, well . . . fact is we don't talk of these things, we do 'em; but I don't mind letting you in seeing you are on the ground floor. We shall be there again to-night . . . of course we have inside helpers. And one of our chaps will carry a cornet. Knows how to play it too . . . so when Number One gets up to speak our chaps will tootle out "The Lost Truth," a parody on "The Lost Chord," you know, and the rest will sing it. Neat, eh? And it will be done on Sunday in all the big churches, Saint Paul's, Westminster, all of 'em. We shall have 'em all by the ear — that's not a pun — No end of a game, what?'

'I fail to see quite where the game comes in,' M'Grath objected, deadly in look and attitude. 'What is the suggestion?'

'To let 'em down, of course. To rough 'em, rag 'em, jump on 'em before the whole world and make 'em appear damned foolish — what?' He lay back among the cushions laughing, very ready to fight for the Cause, but soft, untamed.

'Does it ever strike you,' M'Grath asked, 'that we may be at war presently?'

““May be!”” Harold nearly lifted to the elbows he leaned on. ‘Lord! I like that. Why, we are at war.’

M’Grath watching, with puzzled brows, gave him up. ‘Yes?’ he said. ‘Oh, well — go on,’ and crossed to the sideboard carrying his glass, while in his ears a voice said, ‘the man who drinks alone is a sot.’ Even that indictment did not prevent him doing what he went to do. He was thirsty. Everything that had happened since he got up had conspired to make him thirsty.

‘The notion came from America,’ Harold babbled from the depths of his chair, a sort of sleepy hollow cunningly sloped for rest. ‘Bella B. Glossop or somebody patented it. She seems to have done big things with it during the recent Presidential Election. Smart crowd, the Yanks. They know how to pull your leg with the subtlest kind of foolery . . . ever seen their freak spelling? And they do it. Fancy the House craning its neck to hear Number One, when twang goes “The Lost Chord” . . . like this —’

He crossed, smiling, to the piano, sat, opened, and struck what M’Grath called the sacred notes with a heavy fist, while that tried soldier looked round attempting to follow. Harold was not self-conscious and knew of no complex which could disturb his serenity; but he could sing in the manner of Corney Grain whom perhaps he aped —

He sang now; twisted on the piano stool as though he faced an audience when only a critic was there —

‘Seated one day at Saint Stephen’s
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my eyes had wandered sadly
O’er the last of the Blue Book’s leaves;
I know not who it was speaking,

I was dozing when he began —
Then a sound of music woke me,
'Twas the voice of the Grand Old Man!

'You know the bally thing,' Harold tossed over his shoulder. 'It's a jammy bit . . . goes on like this —'

'It flooded the Council Chamber
Like a Moody and Sankey psalm,
And lay on my fevered spirit
With a touch the reverse of calm.
It seemed like prevarication
Or wrong overcoming right,
While the note of Wait and See ravings
Le'pt on discordant night!'

'Touches 'em there,' Harold interpolated. 'On the raw — finishes like this —'

'It may be that some bright Angel
Will trace it, if trace they can,
From the record of Life's great Blue Book,
The speech of that Grand Old Man!'

'And in the morning,' Harold claimed, banging finally and decisively a great chord in the bass, 'we shall have the *Post* with a leader showing how the women of England have made a laughing-stock of Constitutional Government, and brought discredit on the historic pile — you know their style — which saw Cromwell's Ironsides pushing members from their seats and heard Burke's impeachment of a great Englishman and now sits twiddling thumbs over a cat-and-mouse Act in order that our chaps may not die in prison . . . Splendid, what?' He twisted round immensely alive.

'Sounds damned silly to me,' M'Grath growled out. 'Mind that cigarette. You will set the place on fire if you go on playing the fool that way . . .'

He crossed swiftly and put his foot on a second patch of smouldering carpet, and stood looking at this visitor of his who seemed unconscious of stupidity.

'Sorry,' said Harold.

'Might just as well leave it unsaid,' M'Grath fumed. 'If I could make such an ass of myself, damned if I wouldn't go on the stage as a clown.'

Harold crossed slowly to his seat before the fire, stretched out, screwed his glass in place, and looked with puckered forehead at his companion — 'I say, though, really you know,' he expostulated, the drawl accentuated, 'but aren't you rather intentionally rubbing it in?'

M'Grath took up his glass and drank. 'The boot's on the other leg . . . and I'm about fed-up with foolery.' Again he lighted his pipe and smoked fiercely, like one who has not tasted tobacco for a month.

Harold continued to stare — 'I say,' he exclaimed, 'joking aside — what the devil has Effie been up to?'

'Not turned up to time, it seems.'

Harold suddenly curled up in his chair, laughing broadly. 'Oh, I say!' he spluttered, 'if it's a joke, you know, why, hang it all, do laugh and explain.'

M'Grath decided he was powerless in a case of this kind. He could not explain; there was nothing to explain, and he could not kick the fool out; because, when he came to consider the matter, the fool was Effie's brother, hand in glove with her as witness whereof observe the patience with which the ass did her behest. He gave it up, struggled with his pipe, and said more soberly than seemed possible —

'It's no joke, old chap. You get on a man's nerves a bit . . . I want to think things out — but you . . . well, the point is there's going to be trouble presently —'

'Ra-ther!' Harold chimed. 'What we've done is child's play to what we have up our sleeve ...'

'Oh! I don't mean your show.'

'Who, then? Labour going to kick over the traces? Can't be done. We finance 'em ...'

'I did not suggest Labour ...!'

'Not the Nonconformist Conscience?' Harold blared, suddenly sitting upright.

M'Grath groaned. 'Damned if I know what I mean. Here — have a peg. Afraid I'm not equal to explanations just now. Talk about shining armour and mailed fists ... that's more in my line ... Er ... what about Effie ... Do you suppose she means to come — or — or what?'

'Think I'd be kicking heels in your saintly presence if it weren't essential?' he asked.

'Pon my word,' M'Grath laughed out, 'I don't know.'

'What do you know?'

'That I was ass enough,' said M'Grath, thoroughly angry at last, 'to consider you as a possible brother-in-law — since you ask for plain speaking.'

'Come to that, has it?' Harold commented. 'Oh! you can't rough me. Don't apologize!' He leaned back watching M'Grath, opening his case and selecting a fresh cigarette. 'So she wouldn't take you on? I'm not surprised ... Jove! can't imagine Effie taking any man on ... why the devil should she?'

'My question is — why the devil shouldn't she?'

'That shows you haven't assimilated our Creed,' Harold waved a lighted match, puffed, blew it out. 'The whole point with us is freedom of contract. Freedom for the individual — man or woman — to do exactly what he or she chooses. As things are, women are handicapped from birth. Have to wear petticoats to begin with. If

they marry they are trebly handicapped. The man may come a mucker; but a woman can't get free on that. She has to wait around while her jovial spouse plays the hog . . . nurse the children . . . Oh! hang it all . . . aren't you on the wrong tack?'

'I don't understand . . . in what way?'

'Well — our women don't *marry*. If they like a man well enough, they . . .'

M'Grath leaped now, his face burning. 'Look here, Massenshaw — I'm not what some folk call a purist; nor am I in any sense a pacifist. I have no sort of respect either for the "other cheek" notion . . . but I have a very considerable respect for your sister and for Mrs. Massenshaw; so you will be good enough to reserve your opinions — shut your teeth in fact — if you have no insuperable objection — understand?'

'Not in the least. I'm not thin-skinned, you know. Rather the reverse . . .'

'Yes — I can believe that.'

'Look at it generally,' Harold went on. 'Leave Effie out of it. Women object to the handicap implied by marriage in these days. They object to the lord-and-master business; to vowing obedience . . . to the never-ending type of contract. They say, very naturally, I think, that they are not inferiors, and they refuse to be treated as though they were, just because some folk . . .'

M'Grath turned upon the fire. He picked up a poker and commenced to slaughter it, hammering without mercy on coal which gave no offence. And in the midst of the noise he made, a bell rang without.

Harold sprang erect, screwed in his glass and looked at M'Grath's back. It was obvious that this soldier man was annoyed and refused to listen longer. Well, but he

would have to keep up that tattoo business a very long while if he supposed he could silence Harold Massenshaw . . .

A servant entered amidst a vast clatter of tongs and shovel and poker as M'Grath essayed replacing one of them — and upon the clatter came a man's voice saying — 'Miss Massenshaw, sir, if you please.'

M'Grath turned round, angry; but a glance from Effie standing on the threshold of his room disarmed him. He crossed swiftly to meet her, smiling, the frown gone.

'This is very charming of you, Miss Massenshaw.'

'Just now,' Harold interpolated, 'it was Effie!'

'I hope I haven't kept you,' she smiled, her eyes on M'Grath, beautiful eyes, smouldering, like brown flame. She turned presently and saw Harold — perhaps for the first time. 'You here?' she asked, and again faced M'Grath, her brother forgotten.

'Not a bit,' M'Grath answered mendaciously. 'There's nothing very much to do just now.'

'And I have been amusing him, Alteza. He has been damning ever since the exit of my critical cousin — shocking!'

'Has Dicky Farningham been here, too?' Effie questioned abruptly.

'Very much here. Made a sequence of pockets off the spot. His most deadly screw on . . . I am the spot,' said Harold.

'Um! He generally gives you a miss in baulk,' she laughed. 'Besides, I was asking Captain M'Grath.'

'It was the man's sister who was at the bottom of the well — not Truth,' her brother flung back at her, the eyeglass screwed in place.

'Go away!' Effie exclaimed. 'I wish to talk to Captain

M'Grath . . . You failed me at Harrod's where I did want you, but I scarcely supposed you would fail Mary also. Run away home!' She made a gesture of pushing him. 'Run quickly or those banners we are wanting next week will be missing and dear Mary inconsolable.'

'Mary!' He struck an attitude, his eyes raised; 'that alters the position. Mary waiting at the top of the cliff. A big climb before me! I wonder how often the boot has been on the other foot?'

'That couldn't be. Mary doesn't wear straights.'

'Perhaps. Yet the straits to which I would be put to prove it outweighs the inconceivable narrowness of those I find here. *Au revoir*, dear child. My blessing!' He raised two fingers. 'Smite him hard, remembering I had mercy.'

He made his exit with a flourish of gloves, his eyeglass fixed beneath a puckered brow.

M'Grath witnessed this interlude with mixed feelings; but he made no sign that he heard it until Effie turned round to ask him, 'How long has this been going on?'

'A month . . . a year,' said he. 'Don't ask me, but sit here and tell me whether you slept last night?'

'Slept? Rather.' She sat down and leaned back, joining fingers V-wise over the arms of her chair — perhaps to block his vision. 'Why? Didn't you?'

'No.'

'Then you should.'

'Yes — I know it.'

'I never permit anything to interfere with my rest,' she prevaricated. 'I couldn't do my work if I did . . . now, please be kind. I want you to do something for me.'

'For you, Effie; or for the Cause?'

'Are they not one?'

'You know they are not. You know that, while I have every respect for your friends who are working so zealously, I am afraid of the Cause; afraid of its results, I mean, on the Nation — and that I love you.'

'Oh! but you must not talk of love. You promised last night not to refer to it again . . .'

'Did I? Well — I have had time to think since, and it seems I promised an impossibility. I can't bottle love as though it were sloe gin and keep it by me perhaps for next year's use . . . and — it is hardly cricket to ask me to do things which put me in contact with you, when, as I understand it, you refuse to consider love. Don't you see that such conditions are maddening, that they keep me on tenterhooks — miserable in spite of my love and . . .'

'No, no! Please don't go on. It — it makes everything so irrevocable . . . Besides, suppose I did not sleep last night as soundly as I said I did . . . Suppose I lay awake as you did; prayed as perhaps you did . . . cried . . . pleaded . . . suppose —'

'Effie!' He was beside her now and had captured her hands; held them to his cheek.

She went on, her eyes filling, but lifted to his —

'Suppose that after telling you what I did I found I was not able to carry it out!' Her lips trembled; tears ran down as she forced the words which made for surrender, 'Suppose I said what I did not mean . . . that I might regret . . .'

'Might!' he interrupted, trembling even as she did. 'Only might, and suppose?'

'I don't know . . . I don't know.' She dashed at her tears with a filmy thing of lace and chiffon. 'I wanted you for the Cause at first . . . but afterwards I think I wanted you for myself.'

He was beside her on his knees, fondling her, his arms about her as she leaned forward, the tears running down. 'Still only you think, Effie? Still uncertain?'

'God knows! I daren't go farther! Remember my life. I am going a long, long way farther than I thought possible. I am going closer to the precipice on which my mother stood when she answered my father's appeal than I supposed I could.' Tears no longer fell. She faced him with words, suddenly master of herself, a seer staring into the future. 'I am going from safety to danger, Paddy; the danger of which I have spoken definitely on platforms and at home. All my talk will sound like chatter if I let myself go as you desire. I am shaken, not overcome, you see; but shaken . . . otherwise I could not analyze and dissect the issue as I do . . . Oh! I have thought so much on this question, dear Paddy, since I knew you, that it is difficult to pretend I do not love you. But' — again the words came swiftly on rising passion — 'marriage is a terror to me. I cannot stifle it. It has dogged my mother's life from the time I was a child of four years and I have taken her to my heart and called her pain mine — spoken and laughed at marriage — you know it! The idea has become hateful to me . . . You see I analyze still . . . You cannot undo in a year or two the convictions of a whole life . . . Don't you see it? I have talked so much — aye, used all my influence on men and women; boys and girls, hoping to tear down this fetish of marriage which stands so firmly in the hearts of women . . .

'And I have succeeded so far that I have won the anathema of a Bishop or two and the ban of several parsons. Now, you — who are not even one of us — ask me to marry you, and I reply as I dared not last night — I can-

not marry. It would be a mockery, a myth; a shadow upon my life which would come in the place of that perfect trust which should be the sole tie between men and women who love. The perfect marriage is a union of souls and never can be consecrated or made holy by man. It lies too deep. It teaches the ethics of faith and trust, charity and hope...it touches where no sanctified bond...'

M'Grath, still holding her hands, listening spellbound, cried out here as though she struck him — 'Effie! Effie! Effie!' No other word; her name alone, ringing in that quiet room like a sob.

'Nay! dear Paddy,' she touched his fingers with her lips. 'I must say to the end...'

'I want no end!' he cried out. 'I love you and worship you... Don't — don't spoil it!'

'Marriage,' she went on, paling, brown eyes glowing, alive with passion, 'is a state from which the majority stray, leaving one side tied. Only fools and children desire so one-sided a law. It is an ordination of man, set out and made beautiful by device and folk-lore so simple and inspiring that the majority succumb. But it fails to hold when the early glamour has passed — fails, Paddy! Fails! Fails!' she repeated it like a dirge, 'until it can no longer breathe. Then comes the end! It is you and I who would have to face the terror of those days and nights together; the years of stress and battle which follow on disillusion, waked and laid bare to our souls by the little incidents of everyday life; the bothers and limitations which all who are awake must read...'

'You and I, Paddy, are considering this thing. You, a man, and therefore the most ready to forget... I, a woman, who if I marry would be compelled to sit tied to

you and watch you while you forgot. That would be tragedy for me, the consummation of man-made laws falling on me who dared them. Why, if one of us does wrong and can obtain redress, should the other, the weaker of the twain, be debarred? Is it logic, or comedy? Paddy! It is written. We should never have met. You are a Churchman, I a sceptic — yet I love you, my own . . . and . . . and it would be well for us if we had never been born . . .'

He gathered her in his arms crooning over her as a mother over her child. She did not resist. He held her so that her cheek was against his cheek, the throb and stammer of their heartbeats one in inspiration and effect. 'Wrong! Wrong!' he broke out, close and sonorous with conviction. 'You are the one woman in the world for me. The one I love and worship and never can fail. You hold me as I hold you. I am tied so fast that if you cut us apart you take my life and throw it away. I cannot live without you. I can try to live; and that is not living. You do not ask that, thank God; you are too fine to ask that — for I see that you too are a woman and can love. Once I thought otherwise. I had decided to go away; to cut you out of my life — and I had found it impossible to go.

'If you had not come to me, I must have come to you — not to threaten, but to win, to pray, to beg. And now you tell me that marriage is hell . . . that you have learned to dread it, Effie, from others. Not of your own intuition. Don't say these things, child! They cut me to the heart! You love me — but love is anathema because love, for the majority of us — for me, dear, means marriage. Is that it?'

She bowed her head, shaken, trembling as he held her; but she made no other sign . . .

'Remember!' he pleaded, 'my mother as well as your own. I have told you of her and of my father. No troubles there, Effie! All bright and splendid to the end. Love never dies. Glamour may. Who of us is glamourised — you or I?'

His voice rang like the prayer of one in the dim recesses of a church, beating out his cry before his Maker. 'If it is I, then I stand aside until the glamour dies, and I am ready to beg you to join me and leave you free — if you will. Impossible?' She shrank in his arms, her face hidden. 'Who knows whether it is impossible? You cannot love and draw back for a whim. Love is of God. You cannot speak of love as I have heard you speak, without somewhere admitting the God-given trust you tell me you despise. I do not believe it. Agnosticism, scepticism — any or all the shibboleths — never fell from lips more jealous for the soul of man. You believe in spite of your unbelief. You trust in spite of your fear of trust. The spectre that stands between us is but a creation of your own, magnified and made terrible by the consideration of a great wrong. Marriage is a God-given ordinance which sometimes fails us, but we must not blame the ordinance . . . Is it logical to refuse to sign a bond because sometimes rascals have refused to honour their signature?'

'Look up, dear girl I have won, and give me my desire in this. Marry me. Take courage — and, if this thing you speak of comes between us at any time, soon or late, take the pistol I will give you and place it before me at table — in my dressing-room, anywhere, so that when I come upon it I may see it there — facing me . . .'

He rose; crossed to a drawer and took out a revolver; returned and stood again beside her. 'I am a soldier,' he said, 'a man of my word . . .'

'My father was a soldier also,' she answered through drawn lips.

And instantly he was beside her, kneeling so that he might hold her.

'I know! I know! — but I must give my view . . . Effie!' — he whispered the words — 'personal honour is to me as the honour of my regiment. If a man is dishonoured in the Army by some act which can only end in disgrace on the Parade Ground, and cannot be wiped out, some of his brother officers send him a pistol. A man makes no comment in a case of this kind. He knows that he has been judged — that no appeal is possible . . . so he goes from the presence of those who knew him . . . and is forgotten.'

He held the revolver so that she might take it. 'I give it to you, dear, to hold against me if I fail you . . . it is yours if you marry me.'

She turned, shuddering, from it. He did not mark the tremor. 'Here are the cartridges . . . you understand the mechanism . . . this spring — so — and the thing is ready . . .' He pressed it upon her, and suddenly she sat back — 'No. No! I will not take it.'

Her hands went up to her brow, she tried to screen her face and again leaned forward covering her eyes as one does who seeks to blot out some dream which has stolen upon sleep.

'And me, Effie?' he whispered. 'What of me?'

'Not in marriage.' She phrased it so low he had to stoop to catch the words. Again, more firmly now — 'No, not in marriage. I cannot marry! You understand that? You cannot misjudge me . . . you . . .'

She lay in his arms sobbing now, broken utterly, and M'Grath learned what he learned as he put her softly

upon the cushions. He did not speak. Words failed. Thoughts whipped him, flicked him raw . . . He saw her in the midst of an island of light; darkness on every hand. Thus, so swiftly ran his thoughts, they might stand one day when the earth gave up its dead. Heaven on that side, Hell on this — mystical; not comprehensible, too vast for man's finite intelligence . . .

He imagined he was dead; the world, Effie, his regiment, all assembled there with him, accusing him of this madness which stood over him like a voice from the soul of the universe speaking through the dark . . . What had he done? What had all those others done . . . Why were they arraigned against him . . . Why was it dark?

He moved gropingly on his knees, his hands outstretched, and Effie's fingers twined in his . . . Effie, whom a moment since he had seen lying on the ground dead, dead. How could that be?

Thoughts hammered in his brain. Something had happened. He listened — breathless. Then again words stirred, saying —

'You misjudge me . . . not fair . . . Oh! can't you see — I dare not . . .'

He came out of darkness at her touch. 'Misjudge? Who am I that I should . . .'

Her fingers slipped away.

After an immense silence, so long he could not measure it, a sound came through the room. A band, perhaps; but far off, brazen, with drums that rolled in the bass. It awoke him to his position. It awoke Effie also; made her spring up, brush her eyes, dry them, and again sink forward, alone now, chin in hands, her elbows on her knees . . .

'It is love that mesmerizes me . . . makes me dream,' she whispered. 'It is sex which stirs my blood and pushes

me back through the years to days, when, as a girl, I dreamed of love . . . makes me a coward to my Cause; tears me so that I dare think of undoing all I have done. All that I vowed to do in the hope that I might save others the torture my mother endured. No! No! I cannot do it . . . Hark!

The rolling drums and blare of brass drew nearer. They heard the rhythm of it now. She freed her hands —

‘It is hopeless. It would kill me if I gave way . . . not because I do not love you; but because sooner or later — perhaps when you were called from my side and I no longer had the magnetism of your love . . . I — Oh, my God! I should feel recreant — torn, unholy . . . One dedicated to sacrifice as I have acknowledged . . . and found wanting. Then I, too, should fail. Now I cannot fail . . . we are just two friends who have drifted with the stream, lost our oars, and must wait until Time in mercy releases us . . . I see no other way . . . cannot you see it? Ah! Listen!’

‘I see only one way, Effie. I must hold you now and win . . .’

He held her close. The band came round a corner not far distant and the throb of France’s revolutionary hymn broke upon them fully. She escaped his arms and ran to the window —

‘Listen! That is sent to steady me and keep me to my work. It is revolt! All England is in revolt!’ She spoke like one transfixed. ‘Revolt against laws which are stupid; others which are unjust, but are one and all kept in force by a legislature too decrepit to be of use . . . fat, smug, content with the emoluments they enjoy. It is a sign that people are weary of the rule which is drift; the quibble that masquerades as Truth . . .’

The band passed beneath thundering out its hymn, leading a procession which seemed unending.

'Does it not thrill you, Paddy? . . . It is the call of the drums which beat now for us who are women. We march listening — inspired. Our hearts beat too. We hear the signal of victory for which we have marched and striven. It calls to the militant section of a people weary of subterfuge. How they will roll for you when you are heart and soul for the Cause! How the small boys will caper and revel at the sound! How we who are fighting will respond when victory comes. Stand fast, my friend. I want you more than ever before . . . Do not leave me because of dogma . . . Forget this interlude . . . push it from you and take my hand in yours and help my fight. You said you were sending in your papers . . . have they gone?'

In a maze of doubt and passion he answered her — 'Yes, yes — they have gone.'

'Then stand with me and help me. Help me to win freedom for those who, like my mother, are chained; who look to me not to desert them . . . and — and when we have won . . .'

She paused on the word, and he took it up, triumphant even now when he saw her trembling.

'Wait!' She sank into a chair covering her face with her hands. 'I must think! Forgive me, I must think!'

'And I?'

'Can you not trust?'

'Still?'

'Come with me to the meeting . . . Help me . . . and when we have won I — I will tell you what I will do.'

She looked up at him, her eyes brimming. He kneeled beside her chair and took her in his arms — 'To the

world's end if you order it . . . to the last great stand of man before his Judge if you demand it.'

She smiled upon him and he took her face between his hands and kissed her lips.

Like children lost in a wood and seeking some avenue of escape, they passed from the room hand in hand and came into the street.

BOOK IV
THE SHADOW
1914

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CHAPTER I
THE MEETING-PLACE

HYDE PARK in July, 1914, was very much like the Hyde Park of 1913, 1912, or any year of the past decade; except that it was unusually hot.

At three o'clock in the afternoon it was not only hot, but close and thundery. The trees stood with drooping leaves, leaves browned by the heat, coated by dust and smuts, drowsily alive beneath the canopy of smoke which hangs high over London when the winds are asleep.

At Marble Arch alone a stirring was visible. Near that great meeting-place of citizens bent on airing views which may or may not be new; in the shade of trees, standing on browned turf or gravel, the usual clusters waited listening to the dreary chatter which pours perennially from the lips of quasi-intellectuals, droning eternally of millenniums against the background hum of busses and motors, all busily gliding down the black tracks which once were roads.

It did not very much matter which group you chose, whether indeed you listened to the individual pinned out by Effie for Wassiter's botherment as Zaneschagin; or the man of negro blood who focussed his gibes on the back-blocks of the Never-Never Country; or the man who

stood on a box far down the path and whined of the wretched lot of the Babu who, having 'passed B.A.' at an English University, returned to his native land to find he must starve because, 'just here occur the most injudicious climacteric which debar most enthusiastic Servant of the People becoming Official of the Civil in appropriate form because of existing taboo on Native intelligence.'

They all struck one note, even as Germany hammered daily and hourly on the iniquities of that England which kept shivering Germans from a place in the sun. It did not matter at all which hot-gospeller spoke; each had his knife in our vitals; religion, laws, morality, or the lack of either were assailed, and always England was the upstart power before whom they frothed — and anarchy in some form or other was the prescribed medicine.

But farther afield, trenched on brown grass, were the banners and crowds following the Women's Cause, where a mass meeting of the Militants was in full blast. A pompous, well-fed person was standing high to address those who listened. He was in full swing, facetious, immensely pleased with his points, emphasizing them with a *pince-nez* which he flourished, when M'Grath came near.

'They tell us,' he cried, 'that the political situation is such that they dare not touch this question . . . A fig for the quibble. It is not an honest quibble! It is one made by a lineal descendant of Balaam's ass, in the phrasing of a person known to history as Ananias . . .'

Laughter and hand-clapping rilled up from the crowd. The speaker was known as a wit, and had survived his reputation.

'They tell us, in confidence, that the European outlook is black — and with an aside heard all over the world recount Germany's reception of our missionary. Well —

what did the Government send him to discover? The truth about this Jingo fiction. Was he restricted in his search for truth? He was not. Did he discover anything pertinent? He did. What was it? I will tell you. He discovered that nothing was farther from the thought of Germany's rulers than the notion of war. That is what he discovered and he laid his information before our Ministers. The Chancellor was specific in his statement. He said that Germany not only desired but demanded peace. Are we to believe him or are we to assume that our plenipotentiary was gulled? We know he was not gulled . . . yet, on the other hand, we have all these apparently veracious statements to the effect that war is imminent . . .

'I put it to you as sane men and women that we are bound to accept the report of our plenipotentiary. I, for one, believe him . . . but what about our opponents — this Jingo faction which clamours for conscription, armaments, and loans for increasing the size of our Navy? Does this represent dementia? Not at all. It represents the desire of our armament firms, the contractors, and all that vast multitude who batten on war and on the preparation for war.

'Are we to believe them? Put it away with your last year's receipts. Don't think about it . . . but remember that a great authority not long ago told us that we might sleep peacefully in our beds . . .'

He went on in the same strain, raising cheers when he asked for cheers, and groans when it seemed that groans would help him more. But M'Grath, with his brain on fire, and knowledge to hamper him, stood no longer. He turned away and sought a chair where he might sit and watch, out of earshot, for Effie. He dared not go amidst

those people now; he could wait and hope that presently he might see her.

A great clamour of cheering came down to fluster him, and he saw a woman now in the place of the man, and when the noise died away he guessed she was speaking. This became plain. Her words were punctuated by cheers. He wondered if it were Effie, and decided after a while that it was Mrs. Massenshaw.

For a long time this continued, then a huge hubbub arose and he saw men mounting the platform, others leaving it. They appeared to be running away. A kind of *sauve-qui-peut*. Something had happened. Had the police come upon the meeting and dispersed it? He rose in great stress, uncertain how to act, and came near two constables standing on the edge of the crowd.

'Done again. She's got away,' said one of them.

'A course she 'ave,' said the other. 'Think Gov'ment want the job of feedin' 'er again?'

M'Grath came nearer and said — 'What's going on? Who has got away?'

The first speaker turned, looked at his questioner, and answered at once. 'Mrs. Massenshaw, sir.'

'Well — but we 'ad orders to take 'er,' the second constable complained. 'I 'eard it read out on parade.'

'No,' said number one, obviously under the impression that M'Grath had gone on. 'Well, you just take the tip from me. Let 'er slide if you can cop 'er. . . . Let 'er slide if you 'av fell over 'er . . . break your bloomin' leg over it, but don't you bring 'er back in custody . . . Chase 'er. Make 'er broken-winded wi' chasin'; but mind wot I say — the chap as brings 'er to the station goes down, not up, in the Force . . . down, you blighted soda-water syphon, down till you nigh touch the cells yourself . . .'

He marched off as one who has prescribed medicine of the correct strength. The other man faced M'Grath, saluted, and looked uncomfortable. 'All right, constable. I'm not in the Force, but I am interested. Are you on duty here?'

'Yes, sir.' He came to attention as he replied.

'Army man?' M'Grath questioned.

'Yes, sir. Grenadiers.'

'Better get back again, then. I am in the Wexfords. You'll be wanted presently and . . . er . . . you will get only one set of orders.'

'Kept pretty busy here, sir. Not much time for stand easy these days. Rebellion, sir — that's what's troublin' us. Law an' order gone to glory.'

'Wrong there, my man. There's plenty of law, but no order. Do you happen to know Miss Massenshaw by sight?'

'Wish I 'ad a sovereign for every time I've seen her, sir,' he laughed. 'She's across over there, spouting, if I know anything.'

'Could you get a note to her from me, quickly?'

'Easy as knife it, sir.' He moved a dozen paces to the left where amidst the trees a further crowd was assembling, and stirred a man who lay face to the earth, apparently sleeping in the glare. 'Up, my son,' he called, 'and after me.'

He returned to M'Grath, the man following. 'He'll take it, sir. It wouldn't do for me to be seen there' — he jerked his head, indicating the crowd — 'dressed in this kit.'

'Is he safe?' M'Grath asked, eyeing the loafer.

'Sir, he's one of our terriers.'

'Capital. I had no idea you were so up to date. Let

him take this to Miss Massenshaw. I will be under that clump of trees . . . and here is a sovereign between you.'

The man drew himself up and saluted. 'I should like to meet you every day, sir . . . in the Park or out of it . . . My respects, sir.'

M'Grath passed on with a genial 'Thank you,' reached the trees and sat. Cheers came from the re-formed meeting. Apparently it was in full swing again, the police withdrawn. M'Grath glanced at his wrist-watch. He was restless, yearning for speech with the girl, yet he said —

'England on the edge of war, by Jove — and this at the heart of it. Brawling! Just brawling!'

He began to trace figures in the sandy patch with his cane, looked up and saw a chair attendant beside him, failed to recognize why, and said — 'Well?'

'Have you a ticket, sir?'

'No — sorry. I was thinking of something else. How much?'

'One penny, if you please, sir.'

'I'll pay for two . . .' he gave a coin. 'Army man, aren't you?'

'Yes, sir — once. Got the kick after it was over, though . . .'

A voice shouting in a sing-song drawl reached M'Grath's ears before he could reply, and he turned round.

'I protest wid all me heart an' soul,' so the words came to him. 'I refuse to go into the House as ye call it! I refuse to starve in the gutter av this great city afther years av toil an' foightin' to kape it safe . . . but ut's starvin' I am! Ochone! Starvin' an' weary av loife . . .'

He drew slowly through the trees, ragged and hatless, his hair wild, cadaverous, but erect, a small crowd of children at his heels laughing, but ready to spring away.

'I wass in the Northumberland Fusiliers, bad cess to yez — the foightin' Fifth . . . an' I've fut in India an' Burma an' th' long draggle-tail muddle ye call th' Boer War — while you' — he turned angrily on the crowd, waving his arms, gesticulating — 'wer' tucked safe in bed be noights, had plenty to ate, played games, an' wint to the theatre if yez had a moind . . .'

The crowd increased at the sound of his voice, men joined in, a woman stood with lifted starers —

'Two medals I won . . . an' I wass proud av them. Proud! but they had to go for food. Know what that manes to a soldier? Know what it manes to be chivvied by th' police, summoned for kadgin', accused av drunkenness whin in God's worrld no drop has passed your lips . . .'

M'Grath's interest was aroused. He rose and crossed swiftly to where the man stood baying at the crowd.

'You say you were in the Northumberlands; have you any papers?'

The man sprang to attention and saluted as he faced about. 'I have, sorr.' He fumbled among his rags and produced them; unfolded a grimy wrapper and held them forth. The crowd pressed nearer.

'Stand back!' said M'Grath. Then he examined the package, refolded, and returned it. 'Time expired, I see. I suppose they are yours?'

'Sorr, it goes harrd wid me to-day, an' I'm at the ind av things — but I'll prove it to your honour . . .'

'Not now. Take this card and come round to see me before six o'clock.' He gave it together with a coin. 'I am joining my regiment to-night or I could look into it for you. To-morrow I shall be at the Curragh.'

'The Curragh, sorr! God's mercy rest on you, but

you'll take me wid you, sorr . . . Let me see the auld counthry again — the Liffey . . .'

M'Grath twisted to return to his chair, 'Come and see me. But I can't promise that,' he said quietly.

The man moved on, swung half-round upon the crowd. 'Get away from me thracks!' he shouted. 'Give me room to breathe. I've fut fer the likes av you . . . been wounded, starved, an' drunk wather ye would refuse to thread in . . . seen Hell an' flames . . . an' now ye expect me to lie quiet in the guther . . . Ochone! It's tired I am entoirely an' I want room . . . git out av me thracks, will yez . . .'

A policeman came hastily upon them and pushed his way to the front, with a curt order to 'Move on!'

'Move on, is it? Will yez move me? I'm standin' still an' I'm not dhrunk, but starved . . . I'm a soldier — one av the King's worn-out tags . . .'

'Move on, my lad. You are creating a disturbance . . .'

'Move yersilf . . . you're not my superior officer!'

The policeman took him by the arm, and at the same moment M'Grath rose to interfere; but he refrained from that madness, came near and shouted: 'Private Malony — Shun!'

The loafer obeyed instantly, while the policeman, uncertain whence came the order, released his arm and looked round.

'Take the card I gave you to the address written on it,' M'Grath went on. 'Be there at 5.30. By your left — quick march!'

The loafer saluted and obeyed. He trailed off dragging feet no longer shod by the Nation or in accordance with Army regulations, and the crowd followed, shouting, pushing perambulators. M'Grath approached the con-

stable while the woman turned her starers on this stranger who seemed to be acting on authority.

'It's all right, Constable,' said M'Grath. 'Old Army man down on his luck. He is to see me at this address' — again he handed his card. 'Report it at headquarters if you like. I know nothing of him, but I'm an Army man myself . . . and I take the consequences.'

M'Grath returned to his chair and asked the attendant who had remained watching this interlude — 'Do you know anything of that scarecrow?'

'No, sir. Never set eyes on him before.'

'Ha! Then in all probability he spoke by the book.'

'He's not one of the loafer gang — I know that,' said the attendant as he moved away.

'Not one of the loafer gang,' M'Grath raged. 'No. I agree. He's a soldier. We shall want him presently . . . lots of him if I know anything.'

Again he stared up the path, towards that group which still talked and cheered in their search after votes. They straggled upon the grass in long lines, some pressing nearer, others falling back. He caught sight of a grey-clad figure coming towards the isolated patch of trees where he sat, and instantly he sprang up and moved forward, calling out as they drew together —

'Thank God you are here! Effie! Effie! Dear heart, I am so pressed for time . . .' He caught her eyes, saw trouble, and his welcome died.

'You have spoiled my meeting instead of helping it!' she cried out. 'What can I say?'

'But I had to call you . . . my note explained . . . I couldn't go without seeing you.'

'Go? Don't you understand I am torn by all this . . . don't you recognize that you failed me again, just when I

relied on you and wanted you most? Oh! I am miserable . . . disappointed.'

'Then you *are* angry?' he said in tones which appealed.

'How can I help it? You could do so much for me; you promise — and do nothing . . . nothing.'

'I couldn't come . . . don't look at me like that, Effie. . . . It kills.'

'Couldn't come?' she asked. 'May I ask why?'

'I have no right to explain — yet I must. It is a Service order.'

'But you are no longer in the Service,' she tossed back. 'You told me you had sent in your papers.'

'So I had . . . but Dicky Farningham got hold of them and brought them back. They were not presented, or someone refused to see them . . . I don't know which. I am a soldier, Effie, and likely to remain one now. Won't you trust me a little way . . . didn't my note make it plain? I was hot and flustered when I wrote it, up to my eyes in work, and wondering whether it would be possible to see you before I cross to Ireland . . .'

'But — you are not going back to the Curragh!'

'Just that, Effie.'

'Why? Has Ulster started fighting? I have scarcely seen the papers . . . what has happened?'

'It is confidential, dearest. I throw myself on your mercy. All leave is stopped. Men on furlough are ordered to rejoin at once.'

She looked at him a moment in fear . . . 'But why?'

'I can only guess.'

'Then tell me your guess.'

'War,' he replied, steadily watching her.

'War — with whom?'

'Not with Ulster, Effie, nor the Liverpool dockers . . .

not with the flat of swords and blank cartridge; but with soldiers . . . Come and sit down a moment. It is quiet here. I have been so rushed since my orders came that I am a bit fagged. Dicky was right . . . we are going to be busy at last . . . Come and sit down.'

They moved towards the chairs, Effie indignant because of the tremor that gripped her — sex, as she termed it.

'Germany! The old stupidity again, I suppose! Really I ought to go back to my meeting . . . they will wait for me . . .' is what she said.

'Meetings won't count in what is coming, little girl. You will have to drop it all and get into line with the rest of us; help us to pull the dear old country out of the ditch these damned politicians have dug for her. We shall be across in a week if what I am told is true. I must tell *you* . . . and there is no army worth the name . . . small but splendid . . . ready for our little wars . . . but not for this . . .'

'I don't understand. There has been nothing of this in the papers. Germany, Russia, and Austria are squabbling I know, but that is nothing to us. Why should *we* fight?'

'Because we are allied to France . . .'

'Only if France is attacked.'

'If Russia is threatened,' he said quietly, 'France will come in. She will be attacked first. Germany will make a dash for it as she did in '70 . . . then, when France is on her knees, she will go for Russia. That is the programme, and if I am not mad we shall be drawn in too . . .'

Effie's impatience increased as he spoke, she seemed unable to contain the leaping words with which she faced him —

'Wait! Wait! Aren't you rather jumping at conclu-

sions? What in the world makes you take up Dicky Farningham's theories at this moment? Oh! you Irishmen. You are all alike. You see a stack on fire and swear the world is ablaze. You hear of a debate behind closed doors and Revolution dawns . . . Stopped leave! My dear Paddy, didn't they stop leave and mobilize the Fleet when Willie shook his mailed fist in Morocco? Hadn't we the jumps when he flourished his drawn sword at Russia a year or so ago? Nonsense! It's only Willie dusting his shining armour again; rubbing the rust off his flaming sword or something equally theatrical and stupid. I have no patience for it, nor for the bee in Dicky's bonnet. I refuse to believe in your war . . .' She was away amidst the reactions which appeared, 'Why — if it came now it would spoil our campaign just when we are winning . . . No — it's absurd.'

'I am afraid they won't consider your campaign when they are ready. It will come,' he told her.

She laughed in his face, the humour of the thing evident — 'Christmas will come, dear Paddy!'

'We are six months from Christmas, but not from war,' he insisted.

'You think so . . . Very well, I refuse to believe it. We cannot spare time for war or the talk of it. There is so much to be done, so many questions to answer. No. We would fight any Government that proposed it . . . so would the vast majority — the Labour Party, Ireland, the Pacifists. We should see in it just another quibble to put us out of our stride . . .

'But for the sake of argument; granted it is possible that France and Germany fight — what reason have you to suppose England would do so too? We took no part in the war of eighteen-seventy — then why now?'

'And have suffered for it ever since,' M'Grath answered, patient to the end.

'How?'

He waived that. 'I have very little time, Effie, and you have less. We shall join in now because honour will not permit us to stand aside when our friends are struck.'

'Honour! I fail to discover honour in this. I scent a stupid entanglement . . . one of those political and Foreign Office muddles which make me burn. Why are we bound to France? Why, if France is hit, are we to be hit too? Germany is a great country . . . I am not sure that I do not like it better than France. France squabbles. She does not know her mind . . . Germany at all events is disciplined . . .'

M'Grath leaned forward head in hands; he had found a new Effie; Effie of the Militants, ready to challenge the Almighty Himself did He but cross her whim . . . She caught a hint of his trouble and leaned forward also, striving to smooth it —

'Now I have worried you. I am sorry. You hear, Paddy, I am sorry . . .' He took no heed and the words rolled on beautifully modulated as always: 'I never could comprehend this particular streak in men's compos. Honour scarcely seems to be the word. Is it honourable to strike one friendly nation because that Nation strikes another . . . Isn't it rather a peddling trick to twist us all from our purpose?'

'My friend! I do not pose as a prophet; but you may take it from me that we shall not be twisted. We are too keen set. We have tasted blood and will push on for victory. Remember what we are fighting for! It is the cause of an oppressed nation. Behind all this talk of votes for women is a determination to obtain power and to do

things which men prefer to leave undone . . . Men, it seems, love rookeries, licentiousness, drunkenness, debauchery; at all events, they go very gingerly with such brooms as they have invented . . .

'Think of the slums of this great city, of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester . . . everywhere where landlords own land and grow fat on the work of the wage-earners. Think of our vaunted Justice; consider the inequality of those marriage laws which keep you and me apart . . . the veto of a bench of Bishops too fat and smug and ignorant of the world's necessities to do anything but chant the same old chant, pray, turn to the East, put on pretty ribbons and anathematize folk who approach the altar without the essential certificate . . . Oh! I am weary of it all and would smash it . . . I hate the sneering commentators and would end them . . . There will be no war for England but the war we and our friends have organized . . . nothing to hinder us in our march but the complaints of those political enemies we have unmasked . . .'

'Meanwhile,' M'Grath interjected quietly, 'I am ordered to the Curragh.'

'Then resign as you intended. It is absurd to throw yourself away in an army which presently will be sent to fight your countrymen.'

'If you are right and there is no war,' he said slowly, 'I shall come out of it . . . but for the moment I am tied.'

'Throw them over!' she urged. 'You had sent in your papers before then . . .'

'No. No — that's too steep. I couldn't face my friends if I squirmed out on that, now there really is war in the air.'

There came someone down the path and M'Grath

turned as he ceased speaking. It was Mary Sladen with a message from the front, as they termed it.

'We are waiting for you, Effie,' she said. 'Lady Delany is up, but she can't stay —'

M'Grath, standing hatless before her, explained — '*Mea culpa*, Miss Sladen. Afraid I'm in the way and will get out . . .'

'No, don't do that . . . we can manage for a few minutes, but we must have Effie's speech now that dear Mrs. Massenshaw has escaped.'

'Has she got away . . . is she safe?' Effie asked.

'Absolutely.'

'How?' M'Grath put it so, foregoing the opportunity he held, 'I was not aware of what had occurred until . . .'

'Just so,' Effie snapped and laughed in unison, 'too busy with war scares to bother about women.'

'You make it very hard for me, Effie . . . well, we have three minutes, I suppose?'

'Five at the most,' Mary Sladen answered as she strolled apart.

M'Grath faced Effie without pause — 'If I come out of the Army now, tear up my orders and stay in Town, will you marry me?'

'I can't, dear soul . . . If I had any faith in marriage I would marry you. If I had no mind, no brain; if I were small and tame, slow, cow-like, I would marry you to-morrow . . . but I am none of these things, Paddy, and never will be.'

'Then you do not love me,' M'Grath said, while his thoughts ran riot and kept him vibrant to every tone that fell from her lips.

'On the contrary,' she told him, stirred as he was, flushed, beautiful in her *abandon*, 'I love you as I never

supposed I could love anyone — but I will not marry . . .’

He stood over her, his eyes alight, searching to read. ‘You mean,’ he put it so, numbed and miserable, ‘you would do as you said you would the other day?’

‘Yes.’

No hesitance in her voice, none in her eyes; no flush now, but a steadfast look resting on him.

‘Effie! Effie! For God’s sake, think,’ he broke out, hot and cold in an instant. ‘What about Dicky Farningham, your cousin and my pal . . . Setting all else aside, how could it be? Good God! I offer to throw up my commission, risk court-martial, degradation in the face of the King’s enemies, and you propose to come and live with me! Is that it?’

‘In effect, yes . . . but . . .’

She came nearer without visible embarrassment as M’Grath again interrupted — ‘There is no but, Effie. We should be damned . . . pushed out of the Army. I a cad, you a victim . . . Stay! Hear me a moment. I am putting it plainly, just as soldiers would see it. It must be marriage or nothing . . . I recognize, of course, that you are absolutely consistent and logical and brilliant; but I don’t think you know anything at all of love . . . you seem to . . .’

She sprang to stop him, her hands outstretched. ‘Don’t! Don’t! You hit me with every word. I hate myself; but what is left?’

He took her hands in his, passionately bending to kiss them, begging, yet definite. ‘It can’t go on, Effie. We are in opposite camps. Let me go . . . I’m not worth thinking about.’ The sentences tumbled out. ‘Tell me you never want to see me again. Tell me to go to Hell and have done with it . . . I shall understand that; but this . . .’

'Can't! Can't!' she threw back instantly, 'for then I would have to come and find you . . .'

Far off Big Ben tolled the hour. Five o'clock, and he turned to see Mary approaching.

'Time's up. I must go,' he said quietly.

'I, too, must go . . . they will be waiting.'

'Miss Sladen is waiting. Well, I'm for the Curragh.'

'What time do you cross?' she asked, a swift look thrown to gauge Mary's distance.

'About three A.M.'

'I shall stay awake to watch you.'

'No, no! I insist you must rest.'

'And in that, too,' she looked up with quivering lips, 'I fear I could not obey my lord.'

'In all things please yourself, remembering that so you please me. I must go . . . isn't she coming? I have to see a soldier johnny about the way to get a job . . . poor devil! Time expired and on his beam end. I shall just manage it . . . Good-bye.'

'No, no! I refuse that. *Au revoir* is easier.'

'And lasts as long.'

'Not bitter, now?' she begged.

'All pills are bitter until you've swallowed them,' he answered, and turned to signal her friend.

She came quickly near, calling out — 'What a time you've been! Sorry to interrupt . . . come round later and have a chat.'

'Thanks, awfully. Afraid I can't to-night.' He glanced at his watch. 'By Jove! I must run. Good-bye . . . good-bye . . .'

And so they parted.

Mary looked up at Effie and asked, 'What in the world has happened?'

And Effie's cooing answer met her — 'Nothing, dear. He has to see a soldier man about getting him a job.'

They moved silently towards the meeting, Mary obviously sceptic on the question of finding men work. 'Yes, it did sound rather tragic,' said Effie, 'but it was quite commonplace.'

A boy came trotting up the path calling the evening papers. He seemed excited and presently they heard — 'Evenin' piper! Serious noos from Berlin . . . Germany an' Rooshia . . . spechul!' He drew near offering his wares, 'All the litest, lidy . . . Meetin' broke up in 'Ide Park . . . Spechul!'

Mary Sladen, more alert than Effie at this moment, called him near — 'Evening Liar, please?' she held out a coin.

'Which of 'em, Miss?'

'All three.'

The boy responded, took the coin, counted out change and passed on shouting, meticulous, while Chancelleries reeled, in his handling of 'news.'

'What does he say?' Effie questioned, her face white, her voice tired.

'Something about war apparently,' said Mary.

They stood together, forgetful of their meeting, reading the headlines and thinking, each of them, her own thoughts.

From far across the Park came the blare of bugles at Knightsbridge, sounding the assembly. So evening waned and night closed in on London, London more dusty than usual; drier, with parched grass and trees lying reproachfully beneath the blue vault which held dim worlds so far above it.

CHAPTER II

EFFIE'S PRAYER

LONDON, asleep or awake, thrilled or quiet, in sunshine or rain, is London for the English-speaking people. The roar of its traffic, its tubes and busses; its crowded thoroughfares and packed streets, its theatres, music halls, tea-rooms, shops, cafés; its Regent Street, Oxford Street, Piccadilly, its East and West Ends, all are of London, and nowhere else can you find them. So, too, the soul of London is the soul of a Nation. The hope or despair of London is the hope or despair of a people; the jokes which make it laugh, the politician who creates a catchword, the night club which might be called a brothel; the vast unordered crowds, the men who walk about with a badge on their arms to control them — all are of London and of no other city in the Empire.

As there is no crowd in the world more easily amused, so no crowd is more lightly controlled — yet in these July days, when peace or war hung in the balance, so little did its rulers know London that they feared it; feared their Londoners . . . the men who laughed and changed hats with their 'donahs' on bank holidays; climbed the dusty heights of 'Appy 'Ampstead and found Elysium . . .

Yet London was changed since that night when the bugles clanged the assembly down at the edge of the Park where Knightsbridge barracks lie hidden from London's gaze; changed, sobered, and the throb of its heart could be heard by those who had ears to hear. Gone were some

of the old-time shibboleths, dying others, dead not a few. Gone too were the voices of those who quacked strange doctrine by Marble Arch; gone the tub-thumpers whose English lay so heavily on their tongues they could not manage it . . . gone Wassiter, who sometimes failed as others have and will to speak the mother tongue of England; gone Zaneschagin, the Russian-Polish doctrinaire, who perhaps was more chemist than novelist; gone Tinevala to persuade 'Native State prime Ruler present grant of grants to much enduring Gospeller of Sedition'; gone the great Teichmann banker and financier of Wilhelmstrasse, Geneva, and Bishopsgate Within. . . . Gone others, as the swallows when winter draws nigh: under lock and key others . . . a whole commissary of flunky-named intellectuals who had wandered smoothly, with oiled palms, picking up data which spoke of guns and emplacements, and armouries and angles for fire; who were there in our midst, as the scaremongers had said, industrious, indefatigable, well-paid, treacherous.

But the people, the rank and file, the great, patient, unthinking crowd who vote or do not vote for some much-advertised quack, scarcely knew that these people were gone. Nor were they concerned at their passing. Hitherto they had not believed in their presence; now they had forgotten that once they had defended them from attack. There were so many queer things happening, men were too puzzled to think. The papers were full of strange details. The Reserves were called up; the Fleet was mobilized; there was talk of soldiers passing through the land by night in trains with all blinds down . . . trains which never paused at stations; but went through, grumblingly, neither fast nor slow, with all lights out . . . There was talk of war . . . If so, then why not speak out and be

done with it? . . . There were arguments for and against war in all the papers, and the people bought them; stood in street or shop to scan headlines, hurried away, carried them home . . . patient, trying to read what was not written . . . What was it all about? War? What for? Who was going to begin it . . . why?

The questioners looked to their oracles to glean news; but the oracles were weary; asleep, puzzled — perhaps muzzled . . . but why?

And what was this about talking with aliens which had appeared on the walls where notices for Reservists had appeared? Who were aliens . . . and if so, why? Shirkers of truth, hypocrites, stirrers of strife, the spouters of sedition, laughers at religion, at the Christ himself — all were muzzled or dead or both . . . Talk about the Declaration of London made way for a time and heated periods were heard in a temple much given to talk, yet the Declaration of London remained. No one knew what the Declaration declared. A great man had explained at length what it meant; but the people, if they read his book, had forgotten it . . . and now the stupid thing was in our way again . . . why? What was it? What did it do? Patiently men worried at this bone.

The sailors of England could have told them what it would do; but they refrained. They were busy, busy, as never before in all our Island story, getting ready things which should have been in store, improvising out of a *mélange* of material the essentials of defence in precisely the same fashion as practised by the Navy in the days of Ladysmith's peril; when Percy Scott produced timber and iron and bolts and wheels from God-knows-what-dust-heaps; joined them, and made them into gun-carriages in time to save the town from capture.

The drone of London went up to the skies very much as always in those days of a stifled emotionalism that was new to the people, yet never flustering. It stood over London as an immense drum-note, vibrating, throbbing, tremendous. It came from the heart of England even as the voice of her people emerged from time to time in strangely tense verbiage — Why, predominating . . . Why, why . . . What is it all about? It came from the soul of a people long lulled and made comfortable by sooth-sayers and those who construct peace where no peace is. It came not only from London, but from the home counties; from more distant centres, Birmingham, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, Edinburgh . . . from Wales, from Scotland; from Ulster — Ulster, suddenly alert to a danger even greater than that against which she was armed; who might presently be called upon to forget her southern border-line and look to the Empire's. Did any question of Why arise there? If so one did not hear it. They kept it very dark, whose homes were across Saint George's Channel — in Antrim, in Belfast, even to far off Londonderry — if it were spoken.

Yet at that moment, while men accoutred as correspondents hastened from Dover to Calais, in Ireland and Wales and Scotland the thing was incredible. War? Why? . . . War? Nonsense! It's only Kaiser Bill dusting his shining armour . . . In any case surely a conference, one of the round table sort, can be got together to discuss what is wrong and set it right . . . War is absurd!

True, but so are conferences, Hague committees which produce witch-broth for soldiers and sailors to mop up — legal stuff on the pattern of the Declaration of London to hamstring the Nation's defenders; or any other known type of argument, be it vocal or otherwise, while, amidst

the lambs which are nations, stalks or crouches one Beast, be he Blond Beast or Latin, waiting the hour when he may spring.

Would Germany spring? That was the question debated in home and hall, Germany, the armed force busy always with shining armour and battling sword; aching for that place in the sun which was the fold where lambs skipped and gambolled, unmindful of the Beast's presence in their midst — would Germany spring?

Seven days had passed since M'Grath left Town.

Then came August the second, sultry over London; a still, brooding day with one section of the Nation praying that England should do her duty; another advocating a continuance of business as usual. A brooding, solemn day. More men on their knees before God's Throne than ever before; prayers on their lips; white-faced women calm amidst the throb; only the shouters vocal. Peace or war . . . peace or war. While the fleet moved north and soldiers south along dusty roads winding, interminably, through the garden of England.

It was warm in the house of Mrs. Massenshaw which bordered on Kensington Gardens within sound of the rooks and the cries of small children playing in their enclosure; yet Mrs. Massenshaw sat at her bureau writing letters; Effie before the library table, her elbows on the arms of her chair, her eyes on vacancy; but seeing M'Grath — M'Grath who no longer wrote letters. A soft light came in at the big west windows, a light tinged red from the sunset glow.

The room was so silent, the flame of the sky so brilliant it seemed the two occupants slept. Then quite suddenly came a shrill voice crying, in the road without, news of

the papers he carried for sale, and Mrs. Massenshaw looked up to say —

‘We must have light, my dear.’

Effie started, turned round — ‘Light for what?’ she asked.

Her mother’s eyes took in the scene, as she said quietly — ‘I thought you were at work; but it is evident you were dreaming,’ as one would who comments merely on the obvious.

‘Was I?’ Effie leaned forward, her attitude swiftly tense. ‘What does that boy say . . . something about Germany, isn’t it?’

‘What boy?’

‘The paper boy.’

‘Does it matter what he says?’

Effie had no answer for that. She rose and went to the window; stood there oblivious of her mother’s request for light; stood there like one hunted, driven to a last stand. Then crossing the room she added — ‘There is such a buzz I can’t hear what it is . . . but people are rushing to buy papers . . . They seem excited.’

She halted to open the door, looking round as she did so.

‘If only we had more control,’ said Mrs. Massenshaw, but not unkindly, ‘it would be better for all of us. As a Nation we seem to be verging on hysteria . . . where are you going?’

‘To get a paper. I can’t rest . . .’

‘Send, my dear. We still have maids . . . pray try to exercise more restraint.’

Effie turned to ring, then, with a stifled sob, she went back. ‘I can’t! I can’t! I must do something or I shall go mad.’

She reached the door again and left the room hurriedly. From downstairs came a slam which shook the house.

Mrs. Massenshaw rose slowly and went to the window; using her lorgnette she looked up and down the road and caught sight of Effie running as others ran. It seemed at that moment that the world had indeed gone mad — Effie in its train. She came back to her seat, gathered her papers together, closed her books, and locked them in a drawer. With that action as she leaned back in her chair came words long considered, long recognized as the very truth —

‘Enter man, exit peace’ — it sounded like a dirge. She followed this by other words culled from time. “‘The woman gave unto me and I did eat!’” . . . From the earliest times to the present, it is the same, always the man eats, eats, eats, until he is gorged — surfeited . . .’

There she leaned in her chair, grown grey in the strife which was to lift her sisters so that man should not eat, eat, eat, until he was gorged . . . the battle nearly won, the ball at her feet, her foot lifted to kick.

From without came the hum of London’s traffic, motor-horns, the cries of those who sold papers which hid facts while men bought. The light was fading; a flush more red than golden coming in at the windows when Effie returned carrying her paper. She came forward paler than she went, crying out —

‘Mother! Mother! Germany has invaded Belgium . . . Her troops are over the border! Look!’

Mrs. Massenshaw took the sheet she held and glanced at the headlines, carefully adjusting her glasses as she read. ‘Nonsense,’ she said. ‘I don’t believe it.’

‘But it is official.’

'And to-morrow may be known as a terminological inexactitude.'

'Oh! but they dare not in such a case as this... surely...'

'There are no depths, Effie, to which Government will not stoop, no stupidities it will not perpetuate to hamper my Cause,' said Mrs. Massenshaw, using the diminutive for the first time in her life.

'But if it be true?'

'The end of the world will be at hand, my child.'

'I know... but our Army will have to go over and there will be fighting... slaughter...'

'If it were true, Major Farningham, Captain M'Grath, and many other dear friends would have to go naturally; but no such contingency will arise.'

'But it has risen, Mother... don't you see what the papers say?'

'How?'

'Germany has invaded Belgium. It... it is the shortest way to get at Paris. Paddy... Captain M'Grath told me so, and we are bound by treaty to protect it. Germany; look,' she pointed to the headline which announced the fact that invasion had begun.

'Paddy?' Mrs. Massenshaw repeated, fastening on the one word which interested her; 'so it has gone as far as that?'

'Yes.'

Silence upon that. Pale lips quivering. From without the hum of London's traffic, motor-horns, the cries of those who sold papers which might not proclaim facts...

Mary Sladen entered as Effie spoke and instantly the subject died. The girl crossed, dressed for a walk, saying —

'No lights? How sad! . . . Let me switch them on for you, Madre.' She did so and came nearer. 'Oh! Then you *have* seen the news?' she added, her eyes on the paper and Effie's face.

'We have seen some silly rumour about invasion, my dear — if that is what you mean,' Mrs. Massenshaw explained.

'But war is declared, dear Madre.'

'Child! Child! Queen Anne is dead.'

'I am sorry I was late,' Mary apologized. 'I thought I could reach you in time . . . but in this case, you see, it is us.'

'Us? I suppose you wish me to infer that England has declared war . . . is that it? Nonsense! The evening papers must find a headline.'

'Yes, I know . . . but I met Lady Delany who tells me her brother is under orders . . . oh! and, by the way, I left Mr. Tompkyns downstairs. He wishes to see you if he may . . . and he looked solemn enough for a funeral,' said Mary in spite of the evident tension.

'Bring him in by all means,' Mrs. Massenshaw decided.

During this passage Effie had remained mute, absorbed in the paper and her own misery. She felt that it was useless to disguise it. In her heart she was praying, praying as she never had before. She wished to speak to her mother, but sounds in the passage without told her that Mary was returning doubtless with the great man puffing in her train. A moment later the door opened and they entered.

The Pacifist financier crossed at once to greet Mrs. Massenshaw — both hands outstretched —

'It is exceedingly good of you to spare me a minute,' he

said. 'How do you do? . . . How do you do, Miss Massenshaw.' He shook hands with each in turn and accepted a seat on the sofa. 'So you have heard the news? Really! Really!' He gasped it out fatly — oh, fatly as a fat man should. 'Well, you could scarcely fail to do so with all London shouting it . . . But do you believe it?'

Mrs. Massenshaw showed that she did not, and he went on —

'No. Of course you do not. It is some canard put out by the Jingoës who wish to drive us into war . . . *not one of our papers so much as hint of it.*' He spoke in parenthesis, round eyes popping. 'Believe me, if it were so I should have known' — he shook pursed lips over this, immensely the man of affairs. 'I am on my way to the House now — yes — the House . . . and I will contrive to let you have information, which is trustworthy, at once. In any case, of course, it is a most unfortunate rumour, quite sufficient in itself to make Germany declare war. But I am convinced this has not happened yet . . . Tut, tut . . . in the face of the very plain intimation given by the whole Liberal press I am sure that our Government would not . . .'

'I trust the Government less and less as the days go by,' Mrs. Massenshaw sighed. 'There is no stupidity it would not attempt.'

'True, true. They lack backbone, my friend. They are up *against the whole Liberal Party there*. I mean it,' he rapped out, italicizing each word. 'Every man of note is at one on this. Did you read the leader in yesterday's paper?'

'I confess the papers interest me very little, Mr. Tompkins, except when they honour me by referring to our Cause. What was it?'

'A plain and forcible intimation from the wire-pullers, the men behind; a direction in point of fact ordering Ministers to keep out of this war — if it comes. That there will be war is certain in spite of Grey and the rest. That is unavoidable. Tut, tut! that I should be compelled to admit it! Very well, it is not our affair. We have done our best to stay it and, if it comes, we shall stand aside and reap the world's trade while the stupids fight and tear each other to pieces. *That is plain sense.* Someone must remain neutral, or who will carry the world's trade, feed the combatants, make guns and munitions? If we are foolish enough to be embroiled, who remains? America?' He screamed over this as though he heard the flap of eagle wings! 'And why should America reap what Europe has sowed? Why should we be fools enough to permit her to come into the gap with supplies and material when by all the laws we are the people to do it? You see that, of course. Well . . . why not?'

There seemed to be no answer to this, or he took it there was none and rambled on —

'I saw a placard the other day which said "To Hell with Serbia!" in great letters.' He argued the matter rolling his words as from his place in the House. 'Well — without going so far as that, I ask why should we fight for Serbia? It is a matter for Russia if I know anything of Eastern questions, not England.' He rose ponderously, immense in his knowledge and glanced at his watch. 'I must go,' he announced. 'I shall refer to the subject in the House to-night when I speak. War? My dear Mrs. Massenshaw, there will be war . . . but England will not be in it *if I and my friends have any influence in the Lobby . . .*'

'War, of course, would mean a complete cessation of

my struggle,' Mrs. Massenshaw said wearily, 'if, as they seem to think, we are drawn in.'

'True, and for every Cause except that of Force,' he replied. 'A most hateful suggestion.'

Effie could hold her peace no longer. She rose and, facing him, said — 'Suppose, for instance, there *is* truth in this rumour that Belgium is invaded?'

'Belgium invaded! Nonsense, my dear lady. Germany would not dare to invade a territory which she is under treaty to protect against invasion.'

'Then you don't credit it?'

'Frankly, I do not.'

'But if it is true . . . if it is true,' she rapped out, her hands extended. 'How shall *we* act?'

'On the line of least resistance, certainly. I admit it is a difficult question . . . Of course we should not be entangled in these matters. Some legacy of Tory misrule is always cropping up.'

'But,' Effie asked very plainly, flushed and anxious, 'if *we* are bound by treaty; and Germany has done as they say, what would *you* do if you were Prime Minister, Mr. Tompkins?'

He pursed his lips over this, immensely pleased at the suggestion — 'Well — having regard to precedents, Miss Massenshaw, and — ah — the difficulty of being asked to fight without an army — ah — squirm out.'

Effie appeared not to hear; she leaned forward, her eyes on his — 'Worm?' she asked.

'No, no . . . squirm.'

'It comes to the same thing, doesn't it?'

'Not at all. One is concerned with the — ah — essential tactics, the other with grovelling.'

'And tactics sometimes compel grovelling, don't they

... Well, well, it is immaterial.' She crossed quietly to sit before the piano and commenced to play on muted strings and not quite accurately, 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary.'

Mary Sladen joined her on the piano stool and leaned close, 'What *is* that, you dear thing?'

Effie glanced over her shoulder very much as her brother did when singing and said — 'Don't know ... don't care ... I heard the Tommies singing it — yesterday.'

'Where?'

'Southampton.'

'Then you did go?'

'I had to ... wouldn't you have done the same?'

'M-yes ... I expect I should.'

Effie leaned nearer whispering — 'Take him away, there's a dear soul, or I shall scratch, scratch, scratch!' — the words ran into the refrain as she played it through.

Mary rose at once and crossed to where Tompkins was still discussing matters with Mrs. Massenshaw — 'I am going down Knightsbridge,' she said, 'I wonder if you will see me so far on your way to the House?'

He turned at once, 'Delighted!' — glanced at his watch and exclaimed, '*Half-past six!* I didn't know it was so late. Good-night, Mrs. Massenshaw. I am afraid your daughter is offended with me ... is that so, dear lady?'

'Not a bit,' said Effie. 'I am never offended.'

'Thank you so much! How these things trip off our tongues ... Come along, Miss Sladen, my car is waiting. I will run you down in no time ... Good-night! Good-night!'

Mrs. Massenshaw returned to the sofa when he was

gone and took up a volume of John Stuart Mill. Effie played on, dreamily wandering through minor chords, which seemed to be the complement of that song of Tipperary.

Then Harold came in. He was smoking a cigarette and looked annoyed — 'What in the world is that fellow doing here?' he asked looking first at his mother then at Effie. 'Bad enough to be close to him on platforms . . . where is he taking Mary?'

Effie, as her mother made no reply, sang on to the rhythm of her accompaniment — 'Don't know . . . don't know . . . don't care.'

Harold extinguished his cigarette and threw himself into a chair. He crossed his legs showing half a yard of china-blue, clocked sock and turned to his mother. 'Row on, Mater?' he asked.

'No, my dear; not that I know of.' She continued to read as she spoke. Her voice sounded weary.

'Um! Then there soon will be,' Harold growled. 'Have you seen the papers?'

'And discussed them. What are you doing to-night, both of you?'

'I was going to take Mary for a spin, but I see she's off with that bounder, Tompkyns.'

'I suppose you were late, dear boy,' Effie hummed. 'Mary has been dressed for a long while.'

'Twenty minutes. Not sufficient, by Jove, to get the push so plainly.'

'Poor boy!' Effie sighed, her thoughts far away in Southampton where M'Grath was stationed waiting with the Wexfords to cross Channel.

'Mary is a very charming girl, Harold,' Mrs. Massenshaw said in her clear phrasing, 'but, has it never oc-

curred to you that it is not quite wise for young people of my house, professing my views, to be seen quite so frequently together?’

Harold stood with raised monocle, but he did not screw it in place as usual, perhaps he was too astonished —

‘No, dear, it has not,’ he said quite soberly, or so it appeared to Effie. ‘As a matter of fact I had not thought of it . . . if I did, by Jove, I should put an end to jaunts in Tompkyns’ car. We don’t mix. Never will . . . I say, though! You are glum . . . think there’s going to be war and we’ll be in it after all?’

‘No,’ said Mrs. Massenshaw; ‘Yes,’ Effie.

Harold whistled, he seemed intensely bored; he sauntered to the window and looked out — ‘Honours easy!’ he yawned. ‘By Jove, I’m almost inclined to hope Effie’s right . . . think I shall have to join up as Dicky Farningham calls it, and do something for my dinner. I’m getting a bit tired of window-smashing and bailing out brawlers. War would give me something to do’ — he crossed to the door and opened it. ‘I loathe those fat, smug Germans. They are always crowing and stretching their thick necks. Think I shall run around to the Club and see what they say *there* about it . . . Night, Mater, dear . . . go and bathe your eyes, Effie, or they will think you have been crying . . .’

Effie rose from the piano as the door closed and came over to sit near her mother.

‘Harold is getting insufferable,’ she said, ‘but he is beginning to think — and — and I agree with what he said about Germans and that man. I hate him.’

‘Do you refer to Mr. Tompkyns or to Harold?’ Mrs. Massenshaw asked, her lips in line, her eyes on John Stuart Mill.

‘To Joseph Tompkins, without a doubt.’

‘A fact, my dear, which is equally apparent to him and to me.’

‘Why, then, does he come here? . . . Surely we can do without his help — if he gives any.’

‘We cannot,’ Mrs. Massenshaw decided, closed her book, and sat ready. ‘We require all the support he can give us, and I should really be happier if you could manage to be a little less brusque when he is here. You know his immense wealth and how he helps us both here and in the House . . .’

‘I wanted to call him a worm,’ Effie moaned, sitting quite still.

‘It seemed to me that but for a trifle of inflexion, my dear, you succeeded in your desire.’

‘Either he wants us to do something or he wants something we have — what is it?’ Effie asked point-blank.

‘Surely it would be well to give him credit for honesty of purpose?’

‘Perhaps . . . I — I don’t know.’

‘I concede, of course, that he is very ignorant, very egotistical, and supremely stupid; but he has more money than he knows how to use and would do anything to annoy his political chiefs . . . He imagines, as no doubt you have seen, that he should be in the Cabinet, and is hipped because others venture to question his merits.

‘He considers himself a star of the first magnitude in our dim, political world . . . and if we could persuade him to pay us the sums which now go to swell the Chief Whip’s account, we certainly could turn Government into the wilderness. So far I have not been able to persuade him; indeed I think really it rests with you and Harold, whether he gives us ten thousand next week or

sends it to the Party Funds . . . Those, dear child, are my views on the subject, without *arrière pensée*, plainly, truthfully as I see them . . . otherwise, believe me, I admire Mr. Tompkins no more and no less than I admire other men . . . Man, as you know . . .'

Effie lifted one hand, as though she begged mercy, saying swiftly — 'Yes, I do know. But I am rather tired of it all, Mother dear, tired . . . tired.'

'I am sorry . . . do go to bed.'

'I couldn't sleep if I did, with this fear in my brain . . .'

'Fear, dear child? What *do* you suggest?' Mrs. Massenshaw entreated, concerned at length by the anguish she found in Effie's reply.

'Heartache, sorrow . . . a feeling I cannot analyze, cannot understand; which never leaves me day or night, now that we are on the edge of war . . .

'Look! I must speak of this. Do put away that book . . . if war comes as I believe it will, we shall not need to consult John Stuart Mill for his version of how to conduct it . . . It will be written in our hearts and brains; branded on our conscience — if we still have any left — that we women have helped to bring it about . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw put away her book; her eyes registered her supreme amazement which her lips said with the correct calm, 'I don't pretend to understand how, if war comes — which I do not believe, by the way — how women will have had any hand in producing it.'

'If you think you will understand,' Effie insisted.

'If? Really, my dear . . .'

But Effie rushed in on her explanation and prevarication with — 'Have we not striven to bring contempt on Government, contempt for law and order, contempt for all the big-wigs who stand over us . . . tried to make a

laughing-stock of Number One; to kick away his stool? Have we not done our best and our worst to produce discord, to make foreign nations believe we are on the edge of civil war, that Ireland is torn asunder, trades-union leaders the supreme arbiters; the Women's Party all of one mind, the Nation decadent, cringing and quite prepared to admit the Germans with their theories of blood and iron as our spiritual masters . . .'

'You surprise me, Iphigenia!' Mrs. Massenshaw exclaimed, and indeed she seemed at last to have found some reason for surprise.

'I have surprised myself,' said Effie.

'I was not aware you had taken my cousin's suggestions so seriously, dear child. I wish . . .'

'Mother! I am not a child . . . nor are they Dicky Farningham's theories entirely. They happen to be the teaching, if anyone taught me, of Captain M'Grath, and in spite of your decision we must face the position from that standpoint . . . I am tired of John Stuart Mill and the organizations which lead to window-smashing and the burning of churches . . . I am weary and unhappy, and I ask you for help; and I beg you to forget that I am an organizer, to treat me as a daughter . . . because, you see, we must get right away from chimeras and face the bed-rock facts of life . . .'

'Has not that been my aim, dear . . . have I not always striven to be your friend and guide as well as your mother?'

'Dear! I am not blaming anyone but myself . . . the truth is I did not know . . .'

'I supposed you were heart and soul for the Cause. Your speeches and actions led me to think you were employed as you desired . . .'

'I know! I know!' Effie leaned forward with the words, dreamily staring straight before her, seeing things as they now appeared in the new light which had come to her. 'Oh! yes — as far as that goes I was comfy enough. I liked the sound of my own voice, I suppose . . . I loved the applause and notoriety I obtained. I found myself discussed and analyzed, interviewed and criticized while I repeated statements of which I knew absolutely nothing . . . I had nothing else to do in those days; nothing to think of but man's iniquities and how to unmask him . . . but to know and understand!' She shrugged her despair. 'How should I know, of my own experience? I had none . . . I did not understand the meaning of one half the arguments I used. They cheered me for making them! But, if you imagine there was comprehension behind my arguments, then you know nothing of your daughter . . . less than she knew of man. I hated him, because you taught me it was essential to hate him . . . Like a parrot I picked up your phrases and repeated them on platforms. Like a parrot I plumed myself after I had finished repeating . . . and like a parrot I understood nothing . . . nothing! nothing!' — the words rose in a chant of despair — 'either of the heart or of man . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw sought to intervene, but Effie pushed that aside —

'No, no! Hear me out. I must come to my reasons . . . Captain M'Grath — Paddy as I called him just now — showed me my folly. He taught me more than I had learned at all the schools. He showed me how my action in helping to make a laughing-stock of Government was aiding the enemies of my country, helping to keep it without an adequate Army, helping to strangle

Lord Roberts' appeal and preparing for the danger he foresaw when Germany would be ready for war . . . I was helping to bring chaos, anarchy . . . to — to kill off that little Army which would have to go, as they are now going to help France and Belgium . . .

"“When the Kiel Canal is finished,” he told me, “and before France can reap the benefit of her new short service Acts, Germany will strike” . . . that is what he said, and what Lord Roberts said, and now it has struck. France will be smashed, and Mr. Tompkins thinks it our duty to stand aside and watch the smashing as we did in '70 . . . But shall we? And if we don't, what is to come of our Army? . . . it is so small, Germany so big . . . so small, so perfect, but so powerless to hold back the might of that tremendous force which will be sent against it . . . We shall be murderers of our own people . . . we — the women of England — who have helped to keep her defenceless . . . a lesson for the cynics of all ages if ever history is written with truth at the helm . . .’

Again she sank, chin in hands, elbows on knees, staring at the picture she saw. ‘I knew so little . . . I knew so little,’ she cried. ‘How could I know?’

‘My dear! My dear!’ Mrs. Massenshaw urged, calm, in spite of all. ‘You are carried away . . . you are forgetting.’

‘No! No! I am remembering.’

‘You required very little persuasion to desert your friends,’ her mother complained. ‘I must say it. I supposed I had your confidence and that you would consult me in the event of . . .’

‘Now I have hurt you, Madre!’ She rose swiftly and, crossing to the couch, put her arms about her mother's neck. ‘I did not know until yesterday that . . . I thought

otherwise than I had. I did not know even then . . . until I . . . I met Captain M'Grath and he told me he was tired of . . . of everything and welcomed the — the war . . .'

'You met Captain M'Grath . . . where?' Mrs. Massenshaw asked, stiffening visibly in voice and attitude.

'In Southampton,' she said faintly; her mother started. 'Yes, I know. I didn't tell you. I had to go. I motored down with Harold . . . I got a wire and you were away. I couldn't wait.' Slowly her voice recovered its clarity. 'The Army — our *Little Army* is mobilized, Mother . . . Paddy will be one of those who go with the first drafts . . . I had to see him,' she reiterated this, always coming back to it. 'I laughed at him when I had seen him here — you remember? And I couldn't let him go over there, into the shadows and blackness without . . . without saying *au revoir*. How could I? I love him . . . he knows that I love him . . . you perhaps guessed it . . .'

She rose and stood close waiting a sign, a word which would help her, but none came, and she sank on the rugs at her mother's feet begging for it . . . 'What else could I do? Am I to hate the man I love because years ago my father hurt you . . . Am I to refuse to see him when he is going across to fight for us who helped to bring the war . . . to fight an army as David went out to fight Goliath, armed with a sling and stones . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw's attitude seemed to relent. Her eyes showed signs of affection, and Effie drew close holding up her arms.

'I hate to give you trouble,' she whispered; 'don't take it like that, Madre . . . don't you see how it all came about? I thought I was strong, but I was not. I thought that the memory of your sufferings would keep me free of entanglements; but I was not strong . . . I think I did not

realize the change, it came so gradually, and soon I had no desire to keep myself free, no desire for the old self-centred state . . .

‘I was drawn by a force I did not understand, which I did not wish to analyze . . . drawn as the rats are said to have been drawn by the Pied Piper of Hamelin.’ She leaned over seeking her mother’s hands, but there was no response, no wish for it. ‘The music of the ages was in my ears . . . you recognize that? You are not angry with me . . . you would not have it otherwise, would you? You would not have me send my lover to fight for us without a word of love or hope?’

Still there was no response; instead the cold phrase of the critic who does not understand and never could. ‘I think,’ she said, ‘you are more emotional than I had supposed . . .’

‘Nothing more than that to help me!’ Effie panted. Then suddenly she slipped to her knees, her face lifted, appealing. ‘Again I have hurt you. Oh! that I had understood the terror of this moment, for then’ — she slipped still lower — ‘I should be his wife to-day . . . Mother! you hear? His wife . . .’

She leaned now in semi-collapse, her face in her mother’s lap.

A hand passed gently over her hair; but no words came, no sign of acquiescence or forgiveness. Nothing!

CHAPTER III

REACTION

I

THE burden of an immense catastrophe lay upon London and the surrounding country in those early days which saw the invasion of Belgium begun. Nothing approaching it had touched the great city since the days of Queen Victoria, and the war which added 'Mafficking' to the vocabulary of an Island people in search of cheap gauds.

Crises had come and gone, no one knew how; great men had fallen and small arisen — aristocrats on the one side, 'business blighters' on the other. Reputations had been assailed and he who was wrecked was found hoist upon the people in the guise of a Lord. Many strange jugglings had appeared. A new star had arisen who said openly he was out to rob hen roosts — and the people who heard smiled at the 'witticism.' But there were others who did not smile; they were less sure of the law of their land, less sure that speech meant what formerly it meant; or whether there were not some malaise in speech as well as in Air.

A greater facility for travel had come to the Nation, a swifter method of talk with our kindred and other peoples — yet to some it appeared these things were useless; all of no purpose because when cast on the table, it was seen that the dice were loaded against those who used them.

A sunny morning over Kensington Gardens and the flowers at Number 9. So still the day, so hot and charged as with electricity at nine o'clock, that Mrs. Massenshaw

ordered her windows to be thrust wide and the sunblinds dropped. She had come to breakfast at the usual hour, and with her Mary Sladen, heavy-eyed over her trim muslin and soft white neck, eyes which seemed to burn much as Effie's had last night when she talked with her mother. But now Effie was not in her place, and Harold's was vacant — yet Mrs. Massenshaw made no comment. Indeed, when you consider it, what comment was possible on that day of days for the British people when all stood on tiptoe for papers, when telegrams came only after long delay, train services were disorganized; the telephone so busy no one could use it . . . even the taxis and busses so crammed that no room remained for those who would seek why these things were.

The scent of geraniums, phlox, carnations, roses, all mingled wonderfully, ascended the heated walls, entered at the windows and filled the room, giving the lie to any possibility of war. The papers thrown open across the backs of chairs seemed to deny its possibility — they looked so peaceful. For the most part they were peaceful; but one among them was not, and he was known as the *Liar* in one camp of the Nation, and the *Holy Truth* in the other. Mrs. Massenshaw steered a comfortable mid-stream course, as anyone could see who scanned her papers. Agnosco might have been her creed, as perhaps it was; for even now, after days of stolid quibble, when August the Fourth stood over us, she did not believe. Yet the day had come when England found herself, stood forth in her old guise, put away shibboleths and offered the blood of her sons in expiation of her unreadiness. Well — is it not good and splendid to die for one's country. On the other hand does that absolve the Motherland which sends unarmed men to fight armed; thou-

sands to fight millions, or is it the politicians who send them who are at fault?

Meanwhile the sun shone mistily over London, the Park stood in haze; children played in their enclosures, squirrels came swiftly to accept nuts from those who held them, the blackbirds sung in the shade of a bush; while above all rang the drone of a tremendous traffic, augmented and made more difficult by strange movements in streets already tortured by its immensity.

War? How could there be war — why? For what reason, unless, perchance, the world had gone mad overnight and was bent on suicide. So Mrs. Massenshaw argued, sitting there in seclusion.

Letters lay on the white breakfast cloth beside her, others beside Mary Sladen — some already open, some still sealed. Then from the head of the table came a question for the second time repeated.

‘Where is Iphigenia? Run up, my dear, or send. It is past the hour . . .’

Mary went herself and returned white and scared to say that Effie was not in her room, and her bed showed no sign of having been occupied.

‘But that,’ said Mrs. Massenshaw, ‘is not unusual. Send someone to see why Harold is not down.’

After a due pause the answer came in nearly the same words: ‘Mr. Harold was not in his room and his bed was unopened.’

‘Then it is useless waiting . . . they must have gone for a run.’

Even that explanation failed to convince Mary Sladen. She pointed to the fact that the rooms had not been used, and this Mrs. Massenshaw refused to discuss. She may

have remembered Effie's pleading on the night just passed or she may have decided to wait for Effie's explanation which no doubt would presently be forthcoming. It was no unusual circumstance for brother and sister to be out all night in connection with the cause upon which they were engaged, whether that work happened to be what was known as arson, or the more innocent occupation of staying with friends at the centres which saw it committed.

There was work to do, matters great and small to arrange; all the business of a Movement which would stand still if the Chief and her secretary failed in their duty. For that reason if for no other the coffee was poured and breakfast taken in the incomparable decorum of an English home that day as on others.

By eleven o'clock not only was breakfast finished, but the letters had been filed, annotated, and replies taken down by Mary Sladen. Then came a moment of relaxation and Mrs. Massenshaw turned to her companion to say —

'By the way, no answer has come from Alan Wassiter. I suppose my letter reached him?'

'It certainly was posted, Madre. I make a point of seeing to that myself as you know.'

'Yes — undoubtedly. Still, it is strange there is no reply. He is so prompt always.'

'Perhaps it has been intercepted,' Mary suggested.

Mrs. Massenshaw considered this, then said, 'Ring him up, it is important.'

Mary did so and heard after a lengthy pause the operator's voice saying she could get no reply from the number called.

'Try his club address, my dear. He may have stayed

there as he sometimes does,' Mrs. Massenshaw suggested.

Here again, when it was found possible to get through, for the tension was great, although these two failed to recognize it, a reply came from the club secretary saying that Mr. Wassiter had not been in the building for several days — perhaps a week. He volunteered, after further questioning, the suggestion that he might have gone abroad, a great number had — and as far as the secretary could discover he had left no address where letters might be forwarded. 'Very few of them have,' he added enigmatically, and thereafter the telephone became dumb.

Mrs. Massenshaw scarcely understood the meaning of that tossed-out comment. 'Very few of them have?' Absurd! 'I think you had better go down to the office, my dear, and see what is the meaning of it all. The operators seem to have lost their heads; take the car and get back as soon as possible, take one of the girls with you, but drive yourself. I shall await your return here.'

'I am afraid it means that we are at war, dear Madre . . . the papers last night seemed to think we should send an ultimatum to Germany; or had sent it, I don't know which.'

'The Jingoës may have thought that possible, but not the sane people, my dear. Go — go at once and remember I am in the dark until you return.'

With Mary's exit a new atmosphere appeared to this lady of many fights, and a winning Cause. It was not lassitude caused by the heat, for she perceived no inclination to sleep; rather was it the mind; an uneasiness which had been growing during the past days, had been held back but now became burdensome by the culmination of those singular facts which had struck home since she came

down to breakfast . . . Effie's absence, Harold's — Wassiter's . . . what did these things portend?

She did not know. She did not hazard a guess. She was too methodical, too accustomed to routine-thinking, section-action, or team work as she would have called it, to indulge now in any large traffic as an individual. Of imagination, no trace remained to her; of the spirit of adventure as understood by Mary or Effie or Harold, not a gleam. Dead tomes, dead theories, dead hopes — these were the factors which had made Mrs. Massenshaw a Fugelman; the mouthpiece of a Committee and the supreme burden for a Government whose watchword was wait and see.

She sat now in her beautiful library, the gift of a man who had found it impossible to remain in it, and recognized only the fact that now, at a moment when her star was on the meridian, she phrased it so in her mind, both Wassiter and Effie had failed her. The former she understood, the latter, ever since they returned from their world trip, had seemed an enigma.

The windows were wide, the soft air of the Park saturated with rose perfume drifted in upon her. The drone of a world that lay under the brooding menace of the greatest war of all times, which would make a shambles of Europe and shake the stability of kingship to its foundations, drifted in at the same windows, in a dull rumble of heavy lorries moving up there in the Bayswater Road, while from Paddington came the thud and jar of buffers, the roar of steam, the sudden and agitated puff of engines engaged in shunting trucks at the Westbourne Park sidings.

Then, in the midst of a reverie, while sparrows twittered and fought a sudden battle in the bushes beneath

her windows, a maid entered carrying a salver and on it a card. Mrs. Massenshaw rather welcomed the interruption. She said evenly as she took it to read — 'Yes. Please show Mr. Haines in here,' rose and went to meet him.

'This is very kind of you,' she said in answer to his greeting. 'I happen to be in and alone — will you stay and take lunch with me?'

'Impossible, dear lady. I am on my way to say good-bye to my boys who are under orders: one of them for France, the other to join his ship . . .'

Mrs. Massenshaw expressed her concern; but did not appear to grasp the meaning. She urged again — 'Well, if you are unable to stay to lunch, you can at least sit down and tell me what is going on . . . I am afraid I am somewhat out of touch . . . I see no papers . . .'

'I can stay,' he took out and glanced at his watch, 'exactly fifteen minutes, my friend. Not a moment longer. I came up by car as the trains are all altered. Government has taken over the railways, the busses and means of transport. We are at war — or will be in a very few hours.' He explained the position at large, conscious he made small impression, but went on nevertheless. 'Because of all this I wished to see and speak with you for these few minutes . . . I want to beg you to call in your helpers, to cease all agitation and stand by the Government now that it seems ready to govern . . . You see, of course, how important it is, for all our sakes, that no help is given to the Communists and others who are in our midst, so that we may all get together as one man to assist Government. We must make the task as light as possible. The strain already is tremendous . . . the position terrible.

'We are, in effect, going to war without an Army

worthy the name as far as numbers go, and we have to build one while the enemy is at our gates . . . You understand, perhaps, why they intercepted Lord K. when he stepped off the boat at Calais on his return to Egypt? No? Well — briefly we have no guns, no rifles, no cartridges, no bayonets, mines, bombs, or any other necessary for such a war as this will be; we have none, and must improvise them; no machines to make them, and must build the machines; no men trained to make what we require and must train the men first . . . that is why K. of K. is held up. So you will understand I am telling you these things because I wish you, and you will wish, to cease agitation, and offer your services to the country now that war is upon us . . .’

‘But!’ Mrs. Massenshaw intervened, ‘am I to understand we are actually at war and that no statement to that effect has been issued to the public?’

‘We issued an ultimatum yesterday which expires to-day. That is the only statement made of which I have any knowledge. Germany will not turn back because of this — she will move more swiftly — that is certain. Berlin has gone mad.’

‘Then it was true!’ Mrs. Massenshaw breathed, ‘and I refused to credit it!’

‘Absolutely true.’

There came a pause during which the two faced each other in silence, and the rector said again —

‘You will stand by us . . . you won’t help to create chaos while we are busy?’ he pleaded, watch in hand.

‘I will stand by — yes. That is the only course if these things are true.’

‘There is no *if*. It is fact and God help us all. You agree there? You don’t require pleading from me?’

‘No.’

‘I know it — yet, I am glad to have your assurance. Meanwhile another point remains, one that I touch with all respect.’ He sat gathering the threads in his mind, his eyes stern. ‘It relates to the house called, I believe, Red Gables, which harbours men I have ventured to term a Junta. You follow me?’

‘Yes.’

‘I find it is owned by your friend and helper, Joseph Tompkyns. Were you aware of it?’

‘On the contrary, I understood it belonged to Herr Teichmann.’

‘He may be the lessee, Mrs. Massenshaw, but Tompkyns is the owner. I waive that fact and point out that none of these men, Teichmann, Vorovsky, Wassiter, and the rest are there to-day. They left perhaps a week ago when the crisis became acute. Is there nothing sinister in these facts, or were you aware they had gone?’

‘I was not aware of it until a little while ago,’ Mrs. Massenshaw said at once. ‘I had occasion to call Alan Wassiter on the telephone, but I could get no reply.’

‘Wassiter!’ he lashed out at the name. ‘The man who set us by the ears and you, my dear friend, on the high-road to arson. Forgive me! I did not mean to touch on that, but in the background another curiosity remains. Are you aware that Tompkyns is not an Englishman, but of German origin . . . that he is missing, or has been rounded up — I don’t know which . . .’

‘Arrested? Impossible! He is a member of Parliament . . .’

‘That will not screen him now. I think you will find, too, that he is no longer attending at Saint Stephen’s. Let that pass. I wish to show you simply that all this

points to the position I ventured to explain at our last meeting and to beg you to be on your guard now. That is all.' He rose and stood with outstretched hand. 'I must go,' he said, 'and am happy in the knowledge that you stand by the dear country and we can fight as one man . . . Where is Effie?'

Mrs. Massenshaw answered that she was away from home, but did not say where. For perhaps the first time in her life she felt stunned. The shock of these disclosures had been tremendous. They altered her whole outlook and willingly she would have talked longer, but the Rector could not stay. He saw trouble in her glance as he pressed her hand — 'I dare not remain longer,' he said. 'God bless you and be with us all. Good-bye.'

Then he was gone and Mrs. Massenshaw sitting in her library awaiting Mary's return, turning over in her mind the one subject which now had become paramount. War. She could think of nothing else. War was upon them with all the force and terror of an immense power armed to slay. The drone of the great city came in to burden her. Once more she heard the shock and scream of engines engaged in shunting trucks which perhaps held munitions of war, guns, soldiers — So swiftly ran her thoughts now that definition was hers. She seemed to scent the ordeal which was upon the Nation; the war which people had spoken of as near during the past years, and she had pushed from her thoughts . . . It meant so much more to her than to those who worked with her, and she sat there waiting, waiting as we all do when faced by a Force we cannot control — wondering if it would pass. It was the end of the Cause for which she had fought and preached as the one possible war. War! War! The bloodiest of all time if the portents were true and

Haines right in his reading of them. Peoples of the highest civilization hurled at each other; millions of them on battle-fields, charging, bayonetting, trampling the wounded, cursing, firing, falling — falling. That, she said in her teeth, was war stripped of all persiflage; war as it would be in days when science was at the helm and chemists at the beck and call of those who made it.

She did not seem appalled by these thoughts, she accepted them as long ago she had accepted the knell of her hopes, *if war came*. She had been under no illusions as to the possibility of war; but she had refused to consider it, exactly as she had refused to share the secret of Stillwood Forest and her interview with Wassiter, Teichmann, and those others at the house which seemed to be known as Red Gables, in spite of the secrecy which surrounded it.

Red Gables . . . The name given just now by Haines recurred as she sat there waiting in the silence, and with it came the memory of her long ride and entry upon a forest which Wassiter could not identify. Where was it? Why should it be coupled with Red Gables; why was Wassiter silent? At the back of her mind she knew, but the stress of the moment troubled her. The suggestions and propaganda which came for the Cause all carried in the left hand corner a stamp, embossed in red with a gabled house in miniature upon it.

Now that she was disturbed and at issue with events, she was puzzled to know how this had escaped her. Even now it was less the singular name of the place than the growing suspicion which troubled her since her talk with the rector. To put it quite plainly she was a little dazed as she sat there so still amidst the cushions. She found it easier to remember scraps of evidence than to piece them together. The question gained force, too, concerning the

standing of those people with whom she had worked. If they were honest, where was Wassiter now, Zaneschagin, Teichmann, and the rest — and why that sneer, call it insinuation if you please, coming from the secretary of a club which all acknowledged was impeccable.

Were there people really driving towards revolution, moving in the background of affairs, taking advantage of the prevailing unrest to promote it, or were they true men? Who was Vorovsky? With a thrill of compunction Mrs. Massenshaw remembered that she had never met him. In spite of her assertion at that Meeting of the Cause, and at dinner when Effie had been moved to challenge the identity of Vorovsky, Mrs. Massenshaw did not know. She had argued that it was necessary to take some things for granted. Vorovsky was one of them, and now Wassiter, who was her friend and had guaranteed him, had gone out rather mysteriously. She remembered Wassiter's sneer not long ago when he challenged those words which had crept over from Germany — “*Der unvermeidliche Krieg.*” Impossible! No such sentiment exists, my dear lady, believe me, among the rulers of Germany. It is the veriest stupidity. Germany wins her place in the sun, as you say, by expanding trade, leaping exports, mass-production. Thus, in the future, will wars come and go . . . all other methods merely embarrass the financiers — which is foolishness.’ He dismissed it so.

She was considering the strange meetings with Wassiter at that house, deep in the unnamed forest where she had been captured and introduced to his friends, when the crash of some heavy weight reached her. There followed presently the tinkle of falling glass which London was soon to know so intimately.

Mrs. Massenshaw was in the mood for jumpiness now.

yet she rose merely to touch the bell. A maid arrived in due course and they crossed together to the dining-room which faced on the Gardens. There they discovered a broken window and on the opposite side a large stone which evidently had wrecked it. Well — they were accustomed to stones. They stooped to pick it up, found a paper tied firmly to it, and, as they cut it away, Mary Sladen returned from her ride. She came in unflurried and said at once — ‘It is true, Madre. The crowds were tremendous, the difficulty of getting through immense. Yet I have never seen London so silent —’ She came near as she spoke, then saw what had happened and paused.

Mrs. Massenshaw was reading the paper. It was written in the illiterate English learned in our Board Schools and said without persiflage that Wassiter was doomed and advised those who lived at Number 9, because on one occasion they had been kind to the writer, to have nothing further to do with him, as bullets do not always go straight in a room.

‘Alan Wassiter!’ Mrs. Massenshaw exclaimed. Then put her arm through Mary’s and said, ‘They may take it, he will not be here. I must go to Downing Street.’ She passed into her room to prepare, came out presently and again taking Mary’s arm said with the conviction of one whose eyes no longer were blind — ‘The Cause must wait — perhaps die. Who shall say what is before us now? I must see the Prime Minister and arrange matters at once. If we are at war, or entering upon it, it shall never be said that the women of England aided her enemies. That is my last word . . . Come! we will take the car and go at once.’

So they moved out and drove through by-ways to the

surrender which had become inevitable. Facing it indeed without anger or self-conscious analysis of the situation — as is the habit of the British people when the irony of events forestalls them.

II

And Effie?

You will perceive, of course, that she did not give her mother the full details of her visit to Southampton; nor did Mrs. Massenshaw seem anxious to elicit anything in the nature of confidence. These lapses reacted on Effie. Indeed they became the motive power in all that follows. The girl smarted under her mother's coldly critical attitude. She had learned during much strife and excitement that it is wise to keep matters of great moment in reserve, and to remember that always there exist those who would give their eyes and ears to twist them. That this feeling was produced by Mrs. Massenshaw's attitude as she listened without a sign or any hint of shock or entreaty to Effie's story when she kneeled heart-broken at her feet to tell it, is undoubted. Once, this had been impossible, but of late Effie had seen a change. Mrs. Massenshaw became critical, coldly critical as Effie put it, and instantly the girl stiffened. She had been accustomed to say to her opponents that neither snubbing nor sneering touched her — giving the duck's back and water as her symbol; but she had her breaking strain, even as you or I, who, miraculously, may be flawless.

For an hour since that talk Effie either paced her room like a young tigress, or lay on her sofa, face down, choking; fighting with this passion which had mastered her and now held her writhing. She did not cry readily, as some do. Tears when they came, tore her, left her exhausted.

They arrived from a well but scantily supplied and in a flash ran dry. She was hot and cold in turn with a thought which clamoured, torturing her. Sex! That damned thing! In addition to her other hurts! She refused to think, sat back and found thought humming, as on muted strings, deep in her inner consciousness. It hurt her. She struck out . . .

Her pride, her maidenhood, her love — all were in the crucible; hurt, as she phrased it, by her Mother's attitude. Effie argued passionately, her mother coldly; yet, so curiously are we fashioned the more deeply some are shocked, the more they retreat and shrink from giving expression to their feelings; would prefer, as a matter of fact to write them. These people are not cold. Sometimes they are more warm than cold; but they are unable to say as much in words. Effie knew these facts. She had studied human nature and supposed she understood it; yet she failed to remember them of her mother, who, even at this moment, sat in her room plotting her apologia.

When, in the silence of coming night Effie had exhausted her bitterness she rose to pace the floor. Very speedily it became necessary to do more. She made plans; packed a suit case, dressed for a journey and presently stood ready for it. She questioned had Harold returned, and decided to see if he would accompany her. She opened her door and came as far as his, then halted, a new factor troubling her. She remembered their last trip to Southampton and her brother's attitude while there. He had scarcely seemed sympathetic and had not hesitated to offer his advice in a fashion that jarred. It appeared that Mrs. Massenshaw's creed had won Harold's approval — 'Marriage is the devil!' the phrase he used, now seemed to erect a barrier between brother

and sister. She turned away, deciding she could not ask Harold's assistance. Besides, why should she drag him from his bed, or his club, whichever it was, to listen again to his quips when she herself could act? There was no sense in it. She must go alone, act alone, win or lose alone. No one again should come between her and Paddy. She said it in her heart, her eyes looking straight into the night which lay so dark over Kensington Gardens; she said it hugging the words, absorbed by the intensity of their passion.

From that moment she moved as an automaton, direct for her goal. She opened her door and carrying her bag descended to the hall; opened yet again and passed out as the clock struck ten. It was dusk and a light burned in the room above their garage. She spoke through the house telephone to say she was taking her own car and in ten minutes was passing Kensington Church in the long, grey racer with a shining bonnet over which fluttered the Suffragette colours. An omen of victory? Perhaps.

Which road should she take? Did it matter? A finger post decided it — Richmond, Kingston, Dorking . . . A little farther, but a road she knew. With a touch of the wheel she had taken it. It led by devious tracks through beautiful Surrey to the great southern road which hies, black and snake-like, to the twin towns lying shoulder to shoulder by Southampton Water — where Paddy and his Wexfords perchance still rested . . . where perchance peace might be found.

The wind had risen. Now Effie was freed of the Town it came straight from Channel where it boomed, and the sea ran white-lipped beneath it. A summer gale. Dry, invigorating, but cool. Effie wrapped her furs more closely about her and stared through the screen. The car

answered to her touch. It ran smoothly, the engines purring. The song it made became a pæan of victory to the girl sitting there, convention flung away, intent on its beat.

A flash of memory touched her as she entered Dorking and saw the grey old church and the walls of the rectory garden. The Haines family would be there, probably going to bed; Madge upstairs . . . brushing her hair perhaps . . . golden blobs of it . . . No! Tawny . . . yellow and red in shades — thick. A mane. She was fond of Madge, sister of those two sailors who certainly were in love with Dorothea . . . Curious! Both of them. She wondered if this were so and which would win . . . All on chance, you perceive, as though she were warranted in predicting so much, she who laughed at marriage . . . That brought a new thought. It was Dorothea, her friend, who was concerned; her one girl friend. And swiftly upon the heels of that linking came the impulse to see Dorothea; to see her at any cost of time and — well — to say good-bye.

Effie had the feeling that she was facing a life or death issue, nothing less, as others have found and will. Nor was she far wrong. You cannot play fast and loose with conventions, hazard right or wrong, if you are a woman; nor may you take a man for your lover if by any cozenry you can marry him. If you elect to do so you play with loaded dice in a Society where no pity lives for the woman who has come what is termed a cropper. It is the last sin in a world which takes very readily to divorce. Ask especially the victim and mark her answer . . . Inevitable! Always! Always before God, cold and merciless. That will be her answer.

A sob lay in Effie's throat, but she refused its influence.

Nor did she slacken speed when she came to the cross-roads, which Dorothea avowed were Diana's. Nor did she fail to turn from the Common and go chuffing up the hill to find the house where Dorothea lived; where peacocks spread tails in the sun and an astronomer sat up half the night looking for stars which had not been born.

The long grey car flicking Suffragette colours on its bonnet made nothing of that climb. Almost before Effie had realized the desperate nature of her own case, she was before the door asking for Dorothea, and Williams, Mr. Nesbit's butler, the door wide as his welcome, explaining that the family was in the drawing-room with friends, but that he believed Miss Nesbit was in her room.

'May I run up and see?' Effie flashed. 'I wish to see her alone. Please don't trouble to come up.'

So, in a minute she stood tapping at the door and without waiting entered. The room had no light, but outside the window which opened on a wide verandah, dark against the sky, Dorothea stood saying something in Morse with the switch of her electric reading-lamp. Effie paused at once and would have retreated, but Dorothea saw her and came in, turning on the lights as she did so.

'Caught in the act!' she said and laughed saying it. 'Come in, there's a dear . . . I escaped from downstairs to say good-night to Jimmy — I haven't seen you for years . . . Dad know you are here?'

'No.'

'Then he won't. We never bother him with details. He likes us to take a broad view, otherwise, you see, we put him out of his stride . . . I say, you do look fagged. Is it this war? You're not ill or . . .'

'No, no. Quite O.K.'

She sat nevertheless in the chair her pal had dragged up for her, her hands listless on its arms while Dorothea leaned over her anxious.

'I suppose,' she added, a faint colour in her cheeks with the words, 'you could not come with me for a run . . . I mean to Southampton . . .'

'When?'

'Now.'

'To-night!'

'Yes. I'm thinking of joining up.' She put it so, recoiling from the actual truth. 'This business has knocked everything on the head . . . of course we can't go on now it really *is* war . . . You could just leave word it's the war or something and you'll be back to-morrow night . . .'

'Southampton! I'd love to,' Dorothea breathed, staring, her eyes loadstones against the soft colour of her cheeks, 'but I can't. I have to meet Sir Douglas in town to-morrow morning. I'm going into the Admiralty, or something . . . Sir Douglas says the sooner we get busy the better for everybody. I'm so sorry. What will you do?'

'Go alone.'

'Oh! you can't do that. Ask Madge. Let me call her up.'

'On the 'phone?'

'No — Morse. She might go.'

'No. I can't wait. I'm late as it is,' Effie said, standing white and quivering, her arm about Dorothea. 'Where is Jimmy?'

'He was at home for an hour this afternoon. I've just signalled him "A pleasant run back" . . . He's joining his ship. I was doing it when you came in.'

'And Jag?' Effie questioned.

'Oh, he's away a week ago, quite.'

'Then he doesn't know of the war?'

'No.'

'Lucky Jag!'

'I don't know about that. He'll have to get home again — and Admiral Clancy says there are no guns to protect liners, and the Declaration of London or something wouldn't let him use them if there were,' said the voice of Dorothea.

'No — that's just how they get us tied up,' came from Effie. But there was no sting in the resolute voice. 'Give me a whisky peg, there's a dear, and let me go,' she said as they stood together. 'I feel rather done.'

'Don't go. Stay here till the morning and I will telephone Sir Douglas I can't come. I'll come with you instead.'

'Sorry, old thing. Can't be done. I'm going. I forgot to bring my flask. Lend me yours — diluted, please, and never mind the peg. Will you?'

'Of course.' She opened her dressing case and produced it. 'I always keep it ready. Take it if you must go.'

They descended arm in arm to the Hall and Williams appeared opening the door. He was aware of the interdiction which had kept the two friends apart, and had his own views on the wisdom of that course. Naturally Effie was aware of it.

Yet she passed out with Dorothea beside her and came to the car without seeing him. Then as she sat before the wheel preparing to go, she suddenly leaned back and said — 'Which of them is it to be, Dorothea, Jag, or Jimmy?'

Dorothea stared, then said — 'How do you mean?' while a flush rose slowly to her eyes.

'Well — but surely it must be one or the other?'

'Indeed it isn't,' said Dorothea, although she might have evaded it. 'We are just pals, Jimmy, Jag, and me. Always have been. People never marry pals.'

'Do they not?' Effie looked up, smiling for the first time and, adding, 'I seem to be awfully done,' she did not say more. 'Reaction I suppose.' She seemed now in a great hurry to get away; said, 'Well, as you can't come, night-night, dear old girl . . . I shall be there about two o'clock. The car will buck me up . . . but, don't say No if one of them asks you . . . *au revoir*. My love as always.'

She moved off without heeding Dorothea's reply and started on her run down the hill. It was colder now and as she pushed over the empty roads at full speed exhilaration was in the air beside her, the audacity of that last jest a fact to smile on. Colder, still, in spite of the genial summer when at length she ran clanking to join the Portsmouth road and found it busy in spite of the hour; but it was dark, nothing appeared as she flashed by to inform her why it was busy.

She had forgotten her mother's attitude now, her brother's was pushed away; but the sting of this *volte-face* upon which she was engaged was very real. She could not forget that she had set out to do the one thing which all her life she had vowed she would not do. She was inconsistent and knew it; rather gloried indeed that she had strength to be inconsistent. Whither, on the other hand, led the years? To the dried end of all spinsterhood! To the parched beatitude of those smiling ones who pass their time between church and the tea-table, refuse marriage and look askance on those who dared,

while still unmarried, to exercise the functions with which nature had endowed them.

With placidity of this sort Effie had no sympathy, scarcely any patience. It all ended usually, she said, on the operating table in a Hospital or nursing home. She was not concerned so much with this as with the patent fact that she was not endowed for spinsterhood. Who of us are? She had asked the question in a thousand forms both at college and in lecture hall; speaking unwittingly with her father's voice . . . Unwittingly — so shadowy was her recollection of him — she was ignorant what drove her. Her mother's teaching had conspired to blind her. She knew so little — so very little. The constant iteration of these views perhaps would prove her bane . . .

Meanwhile she raced along the Portsmouth road visualizing the barracks where she had last seen M'Grath, the guardroom and all those plainer details of his life which appeared in his quarters . . . Well, she was going to see him again . . . going to decide it once for all. Marriage? If he demanded it — then marriage. If he relented, then as a camp follower or whatever should be necessary in order that she might cross and be near him.

'A camp follower!' The phrase recurred and she laughed. Scarcely that in any case, surely. Still, after that last abortive meeting — two days ago — was it? — anything might happen. He was angry. Not without cause . . . not without cause. She sang the words as she sped onward; her mind on M'Grath's attitude when angry, her hands on the wheel, her foot on the accelerator, busy with both, yet seeing him there unhappy, curt, applying the brake, as it were, to Harold's persiflage, even as from time to time she applied the brake to her car.

Long, grey racer with shining bonnet and Suffragette

colours flicking in front, headed now for France, not for the slaughter of churches, for France where there was war, and people who went thither might never return. Never, never return. A new threnody grew with the flying minutes, then suddenly through the mist she came upon men who marched — Men! Hundreds of men . . . thousands! She ran beside them going slow, the threnody forgotten. Men! Soldiers — all moving along the road she traversed, marching 'at ease,' smoking, whistling, yet in some sort of order, towards Southampton. Effie longed to carry them; but she could not carry them. She thought they were weary, their step dragging — yet some of them sang. They were in heavy marching order, dusty without doubt, ready for breakfast, but they marched with the jaunty swing of men who could walk all day. Some waved as she slipped past, others laughed and began to sing that curious song she first heard on the Apollo Bunder at Bombay — years ago! Something about a girl and Tipperary. What girl? Whose? Had she not played it herself that night when the great Bland-Tompkins acknowledged he was a worm?

The traffic was growing denser. Effie found it necessary to go slow, to crawl, and daylight was beginning to climb in the east. Lorries towered above her beautiful racer, the men standing in them smiled and waved hands as the others had done. Who were they? They looked like soldiers; but they stood in blocks inside the lorries and she could not tell what they were. Sometimes they passed her, sometimes she ran by them, then a grey motor came past at speed driven by a man in khaki, 'W.O.' on its side in black lettering. It carried three officers with gold on the peaks of their caps and scarlet bands around. What were they? Whither bound?

At length she began to understand she was in the midst of an army, men and material all pushing towards Southampton. The war! She moved with the first cohort and found it terrible, something which menaced. She drove in a sort of dazed unbelief, a tragic undercurrent accompanying her, that she had helped to bring it about. Had not Paddy said so? All this mass of rumbling traffic moving because she and her mother had demanded what you will in the way of medicine for a sick Nation clamouring of its hurts.

Terrible! Stupid, when considered from this new angle. Then came an ambulance going jauntily as the men, shining, beautifully slung, clean, with nurses and drivers and stretcher-beds complete. Effie stared as she passed it. That, too, belonged to war, to the menace and turmoil and destruction which presently would ensue out there in France. Then from the back of her mind came a recollection of Harold's attitude to M'Grath and marriage as it appeared only two days ago. Horrible! War at hand, Harold full of quips, M'Grath harassed beyond endurance, busy with his duties, his burden as Adjutant while she plagued him. Just that! Had he not said as much?

So she ran amidst the lorries and the men into the old town to draw up before the hotel at which they had stayed before. She rang the bell for all its portals were closed, and entered presently. Safe in spite of lorries, in spite of the war, in spite of the trouble that assailed her, and found a couch in the lounge which became hers till breakfast was called. Then refreshed, but singularly unstrung for one so accustomed to alarms she crossed to get in touch with M'Grath.

The hotel was full of officers and their women folk; a busy scene, but calm with that wonderful suppression

of feeling which came with the first outbreak of war. Strangers were talking together like old friends; friends standing together chatting over the latest news. Near at hand men spoke of the movements of troops in carefully suppressed tones. No names were heard. Effie longed to ask of Dicky Farningham and the Wexfords; but of M'Grath she could not speak. She moved oppressed by the strangeness of it all and came to the telephone boxes. Men waited in a queue before each and Effie took her stand with the rest. Her head throbbed. She was on the verge of collapse, yet stood there waiting even as the others.

At length^a her turn came and she entered her box with the swift movement of one to whom the telephone was a friend. She rang and gave her number, found 'she was through' without delay and heard a voice far off which said gruffly — 'Hello! Hello!' many times in the tones of one sick of the telephone. She asked for Captain M'Grath and was told he was at his quarters. Who was speaking? She gave her name and was requested to hold the line while an orderly went for him.

She held it, asking in silence a variant of the question which had troubled her all the way. 'What will he say? . . . what will he say?' She was flushed and in a strange fever of impatience. A queue was again forming outside her box. She wanted to scream, her knees shook. Of all her experiences none had ever tried her in this fashion. She did not ask why but stood meekly with the receiver raised, telling herself she was a fool to wait . . . a fool! Then a voice came over the wire with the old salutation — 'Hello! Hullo! Who is that?' — and she recognized M'Grath.

'Effie,' she said faintly, lest those outside should hear.

'Who? I can't catch the name.'

'Effie — Effie Massenshaw,' she repeated, fear banished. 'Is that Captain M'Grath?'

'Effie! Good Lord! I thought you returned to Town.'

'I did. But I had to come back. May I see you somewhere?'

'Yes. I am fixed. Come here as soon as you can. I will meet you at the guard-room.'

She rang off and made her exit. In fifteen minutes she was there with her long, grey car fluttering bravely its Suffragette colours in the eyes of the guard. Grey, smudged from its race over torn roads and the dust of Leith Hill; a little bedraggled for Paddy to quiz; for the men at attention, close at hand while he greeted her, to appraise or turn down; for the sentry, pacing stolidly up and down only a few yards distant to search with the tail of his eye . . . Then out of the mist came M'Grath in khaki, spurs jingling a little clatter of steel as he stooped to unfasten her door, his voice tuned to meet her ears only as he took his place beside her — 'Your own little gee . . .! Run her up to my quarters — and — are you alone?'

She noticed he did not smile nor seem urgent to welcome her. She had been aching for this moment . . . and now he failed to smile.

They drew a little apart mentally. Physically she came nearer as she leaned forward turning on the juice . . . 'Alone, yes . . . had to,' she answered, moving as directed. Stopped. Got out and reached his room while the answer repeated itself in her brain. 'Alone, yes. Had to.' 'Stupid, was it not?' She asked the question looking up at him.

He closed the door and put her in his chair. It struck

her they were like children who had been separated for some months — at school perhaps — coming to greet each other again, eyeing each other, uncertain what to say, and now that they were together standing awkwardly to scrutinize each other, waiting for the other to begin . . .

And at length M'Grath began. He said — 'Look here, you know, you shouldn't have come alone . . . Why did you?'

With quivering lips she looked up at him saying quietly — 'There was no other way. When I came before we bungled it . . . perhaps that was because we were not alone . . . I — I came to — to ask you to marry me . . .'

He remained quite still, looking down at her. Then he said, very gently — 'But you refused to marry me when you were here — only two days ago.'

'That was a phase,' she said, and left it so.

With equal gravity he returned — 'We sail to-day. To-morrow we shall be in France.'

'I guessed it!' she answered, the child attitude racing to silence her; thrusting it back, refusing to listen, 'but — are you glad I came, or — or shall I go away? I am awfully tired, Paddy . . . are you sorry I came?'

'You know I am glad . . . regretting the lost hours of sunshine only. Can't you guess, even now, what your presence means to me?' She noticed he did not come near, did not take her in his arms, and the words which followed explained why. 'You see,' he said, 'you told me you did not believe in marriage . . . then how? Forgive me! What am I to believe? Is this another phase or . . .'

She lifted her hands, pleading. 'Don't! Analysis is no use . . . I told you what I came to do . . . will you?'

He had not rested a moment since they entered. He had paced the room, up and down before her, worried,

perhaps angry — she could not tell which. She felt for the first time that she had played with his life. Just played with it . . . and now the battle was joined. No time left. Ghastly! What could she do more than she had done? She rose and moved quaking to meet him — ‘You are not making it very easy for me, Paddy. What shall I do? — Go?’

In a moment he was beside her, looking down at her, holding her. He might have retaliated by asking whether she had considered him in the matter; all through its long stages; but he said: ‘Does Mrs. Massenshaw know you are willing to marry me?’

‘No.’

‘But you are?’

‘Yes — if you still wish it.’

He half lifted her, half bent to meet her. His cheek touched hers. His mind harked back — ‘Good God! You didn’t suppose I wanted to snub you?’

‘No, no!’ She shook it at him as well as she was able. ‘But I was afraid. I have been such a fool.’

‘And there isn’t a minute!’ he whispered, gazing round, denying her indictment, staring about, at the window but holding her — holding her. Then again words came to him — ‘Look! You’ll have to cross with us. There’s no other way now.’

‘Cross?’ she asked, her arms lifted to hold him, brown eyes lifted also seeking light . . .

‘To France. Somehow. God knows how.’

‘Where my lord goes,’ she smiled, her cheek against his cheek, ‘I go, too.’

‘I know . . . I know.’

A bugle rang out as at Knightsbridge, long long ago, as Effie shivered in his arms.

'Assembly!' he said; then with a swift turn, 'You will have to go as a nurse. I can fix that, with Dicky's help. Know anything about it?' He was frightfully brusque, tense — speaking against time.

'Nothing — but I can learn.'

'Right. We will see the C.O. presently, but if you want to stay over there' — he indicated France with a twist of his thumb — 'you'll have to get a job. Here's a manual. Look it over. Get hold of the patter . . . I shall be gone an hour. When I come back, we will see about getting fixed up. That all plain, little girl?'

'Yes.'

'No reservations?'

'None . . . but I have no kit.'

Again he pushed the door close behind him and gathered her in his arms. 'Never mind the kit,' is what he said. Nothing more and was gone.

But Effie had gleaned an answer to that question which had troubled her. She knew now just where she stood. And she was very tired. So she crossed over and snuggled down upon his bed.

At the end of an hour he found her there — asleep!

THE END

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THE FIRE OF SPRING



EDWARD NOBLE

